Sermons

Mac Carthy

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/sermonsforsunday0000dmah

SERMONS

FOR

SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS;

THE BLESSED VIRGIN,

CHARITY SERMONS, PANEGYRICS OF THE SAINTS, &c.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

REV. N. TUITE MAC CARTHY, S.J.

BY D. MAHONY, ESQ.

ALMA COLLEGE
252
LIBRARY
Mc 127
Alma, California

FATHERS' LIBRARY
ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH,
ALMA COLLEGE LIBRARY

Third Edition.

Dublin:
JAMES DUFFY & SONS, 15 WELLINGTON QUAY,
AND 1A PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.
1881.

9092

DUBLIN
PRINTED BY EDMUND BURKE & COMPANY,
61 AND 62 GREAT STRAND STREET.

LIBRARY
Alma, California

CONTENTS.

PAGE

INTRODUCTION, ... v
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF THE ABBE MAC CARTHY, . . xiv

SERMONS FOR SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS.

THE LAST JUDGMENT. For the First Sunday of Advent, . 1
THE WORD OF GOD. For the Third Sunday of Advent, . 22
THE STATE OF HUMILIATION IN WHICH JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN. For Christmas Day, ... 41
THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST DEMONSTRATED BY THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROPHECIES WHICH REFER TO THE IGNOMINY AND SUFFERINGS OF THE MESSIAH. For Palm Sunday, 58
TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH. For Pentecost Sunday, . . 71
THE DIVINITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION PROVED BY ITS MYSTERIES. For Trinity Sunday, ... 89
JESUS CHRIST CONSIDERED AS THE PRINCIPLE OF RUIN AND RESURRECTION. For the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, and the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, 106
GREATNESS OF THE SAINTS. For the Feast of All Saints, . 131
IMMORTALITY OF MAN. For the same Festival, . . 148

SERMONS RELATIVE TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

DEVOTION TO MARY. For the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, and the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple, ... 165
GREATNESS OF MARY. For the Feast of the Asumption of the Blessed Virgin, ... 184
DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF MARY, . . . 205
IMITATION OF MARY AND ELIZABETH. A Discourse delivered by the Author at his first Mass, ... 224

SERMONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

PAGE

SACRIFICES AND REWARDS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. For the reception of a Religious, on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, ... 233

MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST, CONSIDERED AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD, AND THE RELIGIOUS SOUL WHO CONSECRATES HERSELF TO HIM. For the Profession of a Religious, . 246

SPIRITUAL BIRTH OF A RELIGIOUS SOUL. For the Profession of a Religious, on the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, ... 260

THE PERNICIOUS EFFECTS OF BAD BOOKS, . . . 274

MEDITATIONS UPON THE TRUTHS OF ETERNITY. At the opening of a Retreat, ... 291

CHARITY SERMONS.

CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE. On behalf of the Poor, . . 311

OBLIGATIONS OF ALMS-GIVING. In support of an Orphan Asylum, 330

ADVANTAGES OF ALMS-GIVING. For the benefit of Poor Children in the Prisons of France, ... 345

THE MISSION OF LOUISIANA. Its Claims and Prospects, . 363

ECCLESIASTICAL SEMINARIES. For the Maintenance of these Establishments in France, ... 380

SERMONS AGAINST INFIDELITY.

1.—FOLLY OF THE INFIDEL, ... 401

2.—GUILT OF THE INFIDEL, ... 421

3.—MISERY OF THE INFIDEL, ... 439

PANEGYRICS OF THE SAINTS.

ST. PETER, PRINCE OF THE APOSTLES, ... 461

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSYSIUM, ... 473

ST. VINCENT OF PAUL. A Charity Sermon, . . . 488

ST. NICHOLAS, ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA, ... 512

ST. SATURNINUS, FIRST BISHOP OF TOULOUSE, . . . 528

ALMA COLLEGE
ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
LIBRARY
Alma, California

INTRODUCTION.

If the name and character of the Abbé Mac Carthy were as familiar as they ought to be to the mass of his countrymen, it would be unnecessary to advocate the claims of the following pages to their favourable notice. He has long been celebrated throughout France as one of the ablest defenders of religion in modern times; he is universally acknowledged to have been little inferior, if not equal, to any of the preachers of that country, where pulpit eloquence remains unrivalled; he has been venerated even in the worst times, and by the worst men, for his eminent sanctity and apostolic spirit, as well as for his amiable and benevolent disposition; and the countries which were blessed by the exercise of his zeal, still gratefully cherish the memory of his virtues, and the traditions of the wonders he achieved. The intrinsic excellence of his apostolic precepts, and the beneficial influence of his virtuous example, must therefore commend even this feeble attempt to furnish the edifying details of his life, and to interpret the emanations of his brilliant abilities; but associated as he has been with this country by ties of birth, of early education, of relationship with many of its distinguished members, and descent from an ancient and honoured dynasty, who sustained so many sacrifices for religion, this imperfect memorial must possess an especial interest for every Irish Catholic. If a laudable spirit of gratitude and regard could have persuaded nations to bring from distant lands the lifeless ashes of those from whom they derived some glory or benefit, how much more earnestly should not we desire to see the imperishable relics of the virtue and abilities of an eminent countryman enshrined amongst ourselves? Independently of the practical value of this work, a feeling of regard for the distinguished Irishman whom it commemorates, should procure it a favourable notice. His memory should not be consigned to ignominious indifference

in his native land, when more than one foreign country preserves it with veneration and regard. Whilst the heart of society in this country is corrupted, and its feelings are debased by a hero-worship more degrading than the adoration of the crawling things of Egypt—a deification of those foreigners whose mischievous mission has ever been to oppress and enslave, and whose murderous path has ever been tracked by death and ruin—whilst their monuments desecrate our soil and a miserable pride perpetuates their names—all that is great and glorious in the memory of Irishmen seems consigned to an oblivion dark as that of the grave where their liberties lie buried. To awaken Irishmen from this ungrateful and inglorious indifference—to make them cherish the memory of their forgotten countrymen who would have left a deathless name behind them, had their lot been cast in more favoured lands—the most effectual means are obviously to lay before them the characters and actions of those who have hitherto been undeservedly consigned to neglect and oblivion, to hold up the faithful mirror of their virtues and achievements, and thus to convince even the most sceptical, that there are many Irishmen now forgotten and unknown, who possess far more exalted titles to public regard than the foreign tyrants whose names should here at least be execrated, instead of being honoured and applauded as they are. Much has been already done to effect this desirable end, in a political point of view, by a body who have been requited for their exertions by slander and invective; but a great deal more remains to be done, in illustrating the religious biography of this country. There is not upon this earth a land so rich as ours in such materials. The lives of our hosts of saints at home, and of our countless missionaries and scholars abroad, are a mine of religious literature; but its wealth remains almost untouched and unexplored. And surely every true friend to Ireland must confess that this should not be so. Every Irishman must earnestly desire to see the lives of his countrymen occupy the same position in his country's literature, as such biographies occupy elsewhere. Viewing the present undertaking, therefore, in this very partial light, and abstracting from considerations of infinitely higher importance, this feeble attempt to rescue the name of the Irish apostle of modern France from the oblivion by which it has been too long obscured in his native land, and to reflect back upon that land even a shadowy glimmering of the lustre of that great light which shone with such brilliancy through the moral darkness in which the scene of his exertions has been shrouded, must

deeply interest the sympathies of those for whose benefit it has been undertaken, and disarm the severity of the criticism which is too well merited by the presumptuous confidence that would venture upon an effort so far beyond its strength.

But these precious remains are also endeared to us by a far holier sentiment than patriotism could suggest; or, rather, religion consecrates the sentiment in reference to them, which human feeling dictates. They are endeared to us by the combined influence of affection and duty—by an affection sacred as that which led the children of Israel, in the hour of their deliverance, to carry the bones of the patriarch to the resting-place of his fathers*—by the duty which obliges us to venerate the relics of the saints of God, and to believe that they impart His blessings to the faithful; for the example of a perfect life, and the effusions of an eloquence dictated by the Holy Spirit, are relics bequeathed to us by this great and good man, who has been so powerful in word and work; and we are justified in the hope that as the prophet's relics restored the dead to life,† so these also may co-operate in rescuing many from a more dangerous death. The wicked enactments which drove the family of this Irish apostle into exile, deprived our country of his splendid services. In the mysterious dispensations of Providence, the malignant but powerless efforts which were employed to crush the faith of Ireland, were thus converted into a signal benefit towards a nation to which that faith owed much. But it is incumbent on us who have escaped the vindictive fury of that barbarous code, to repair the loss which our country has sustained, to receive the wise and holy counsels which he delivered to strangers with such surpassing energy and success, to profit by the examples which his life afforded, and as far as lies within our power, to verify the sentiment of the Apostle, "*Defunctus adhuc loquitur*,"‡ which an eminent prelate inscribed upon his bier. The momentous subjects, which he has treated with such marvellous power—the profound truths which he has drawn from the depths of the sublimest mysteries, raising the feeble intellects of man, as if on angel's wings, to the contemplation of the truths which these mysteries contain, and enabling them to glance at the glory behind the veil, without being dazzled by its brightness—the humiliations of the birth, and life, and death of the eternal WORD, demonstrated with apostolic energy to be the proudest manifestations of His majesty, and the most stupendous proofs

* *Exodus* xiii: 19. † 2 *Kings* xiii. 21. ‡ *Heb.* xi. 4.

of His Divinity—the dignity of His ever blessed Mother, the greatness and the glory of His saints, and the triumphs of His everlasting Church, sternly asserted against an unbelieving world—the great truths of eternity proclaimed in all their sublimity and grandeur—the perfection of the religious life maintained in defiance of the sarcasms of the prejudiced and the worldly-minded—the folly, guilt, and misery of infidelity pourtrayed with a power worthy of Augustine or Tertullian, and precept confirmed and enforced by the examples of illustrious saints—all these topics, inculcated with an eloquence seldom equalled, and never surpassed, are full of the deepest significance to the mind of every Christian; but enforced as they have been by one of our own countrymen, by one of our "kinsmen according to the flesh,"* and now, as it were, re-echoed from his grave in a foreign land, they speak with peculiar force to every Irish heart. Such a man as the Abbé Mac Carthy was not raised up for the benefit of a single country, or a single generation. Virtues and talents such as his must exercise an influence throughout all time; they possess a world-wide expansiveness which must embrace every country, and more particularly the country which cradled them. It has, therefore, been almost a subject of reproach to our literature that whilst such laudable efforts have been made, during late years, in the publication of works of a national and religious character, no effort has hitherto been made to furnish the Irish Catholic community with such a work as the following, which combines both these characteristics in such an eminent degree.

And the present times peculiarly require such a work as this. The lofty, straightforward, independent Catholic spirit which pervades these sermons, proudly asserting and glorying in the most calumniated Catholic truths, in a country and at a period when these truths were treated with the most marked derision, must administer a stern rebuke to the compromising, servile, timorous, latitudinarian tone and feeling of some Catholics—and many of them who pretend to most enlightenment—at the present day. Such of these sermons as either expressly or incidentally assail the infidel principles which were so ruinously prevalent in France when they were preached, may perhaps to many seem useless in this country, the very soil of which is believed to be poisonous to infidelity. But it is unfortunately too notorious that these insidious prin-

* *Rom.* ix. 3.

ciples have acquired a mischievous popularity even here—that their scattered seeds have been profusely sown amongst us, whether they be suffered to attain a pernicious maturity and luxuriance, or whether they may be trampled under foot, or vigilantly rooted out, or forced to wither and decay in this faithful land of ours. The fundamental principle of Protestantism, which is subversive of faith by rejecting authority which is essential to the exercise of that virtue, and erecting individual, erring, and capricious reason into the ultimate tribunal which is to decide every question of religion, and therefore to investigate not only the *motive* but the *object* of faith, which is so often beyond its reach, must necessarily terminate in infidelity. A fatal experience has confirmed the truth of Fenelon's alternative—"Catholic or Deist." When the principle of obedience which binds men to the Church of Christ once gives way, the bewildered intellect is hurried along the downward slope to ultimate scepticism and unbelief, through the various modifications of error which occupy the intermediate space, and indicate the gradual transition. It may be arrested in this descent: it may find a resting-place in one of these religious systems which spring up along that steep and slippery course: it may be entangled by the influence of old associations, old customs, and formularies, and be thus attached to some one of the institutions which derive a vitality from retaining some scattered elements of the stately trunk that towers far above—such, for instance, as a hierarchy, and the semblance of a constitution; and there it possibly may remain throughout its brief existence, lulled by the sleepy dulness of the Anglican establishment, or lured by its glittering fruits. But as the loose and shifting soil is moved by intestine agitation; and the branches snap asunder from inherent rottenness, and the trunk itself is devoured by the vermin which infest it, many a mind which vainly hoped for a sanctuary amidst such a mass of corruption and decay, is precipitated to the bleak and desolate region of Calvinism. Some obstacle may retard the wandering spirit here again; it may recoil with horror from the darkness below, and cling with all the energy of despair to some of the short-lived *fungi* of Presbyterianism, Trinitarianism, Methodism, or the other endless varieties of decayed vegetation which sprout in rank luxuriance amid that fetid waste; but these are crushed at once in the least collision with a vigorous mind, led on by this first impulse; and the transition from them to Socinianism and Deism—to the rejection of all revealed truth—is rapid and almost insensible. Hence, whatever obstacles may

retard or obstruct this movement, the impelling force is there still, hurrying the mind which once loses its hold of the grand attractive principle, to the ruinous abyss of impiety and atheism. Experience has attested this tendency in numberless individual instances; it pervades the history of dissent from the Church; and its gradual progress may be tracked in every succeeding age. The earlier heresies and schisms were comparatively trifling deviations from doctrine or discipline; subsequent times witnessed bolder assaults and more violent disruptions, until finally the Gospel has been altogether rejected and ridiculed, as in the daring revolt from religion in France, or regarded as a mere fable, as in the unintelligible systems of Germany; for these have been the last developments of the boasted principle of private judgment. If such a development had not yet been attained, the manifest tendency of that principle would suggest the necessity of guarding against the apprehended danger of infidelity; and the assaults which the following pages contain upon that mischievous doctrine would, even in that case render them desirable, as beacons to deter the mind which trusted to its own feeble and erring lights, from the precipice towards which it was hastening. But when open and undisguised infidelity has been professed and propagated those many years past—when it has already wasted other lands, and is now stealthily advancing to invade our own—it should not be left to the doubtful contingency of a spontaneous extinction. Neither reason nor experience warrant the belief that it will disappear of itself, or that Providence will crush it without some effort on our part. We must beware of its approach; we must assail it in every stronghold; we must battle with it in every shape and form; we must tear every vestige of it from the heart of our country with a vigorous hand. Our past fidelity affords no guarantee that we too may not be betrayed into an apostasy as dark and fearful as that into which other nations that had long remained faithful have fallen at last. Although we may hope that the same power which guarded our country from the tide of barbarism that desolated the rest of Europe in ages far away, and again stayed the proud waves of the more mischievous inundation of heresy in later times, may also shelter it from the ruinous speculations which have been floating these years past through many neighbouring lands, our inactive security and supineness should not afford these dangerous theories an easy access. It is unfortunately too notorious that such principles are gaining a fast

hold upon the minds of many of the educated and half educated classes of this country, and that the sphere of their influence is widening rapidly. Various causes are conspiring to promote and strengthen that influence. The undisguised infidelity of Gibbon, Hume, Bolingbroke, and a host of other English writers, combined as it has been with the most interesting historical speculations, and philosophical and political inquiries, and adorned with all the graces of a matchless diction, and the same sentiments openly advocated, or insidiously, and therefore more dangerously insinuated in the effusions of some modern English poets, and the pestilent productions of the periodical press, has worked its mischievous way into many minds whose feebleness disqualifies them from detecting the sophistry of such specious plausibilities, and whose corruption disposes them to receive every absurdity that favours their wickedness; and the virulent anti-Catholic malignity of nearly all English literature, by assailing the venerable parent of religious truth, aims a deadly blow, through its sides, at all revealed religion. Much of the literature of France and Germany also co-operates most ruinously in propagating the disastrous influence of infidel principles in this country, as they have too fatally effected the same mischief in the countries from whence this literature has been imported. From France, beside the works of such notorious infidels as Rousseau, Voltaire, Volney, Diderot, D'Alembert, and the other Encyclopedists, a hideous and terrific amount of infidelity is manifestly propagated by the lighter and more popular productions of Victor Hugo, "George Sand," and even by the otherwise admirable productions of Augustine Thierry, as well as by the fatalism inculcated in the popular romances of Dumas, and the works of Thiers, and more particularly by the diabolical slanders of Michelet, Quinet, and Eugene Sue, which though ostensibly directed against the Jesuits, contain a most dangerous undercurrent of infidelity, and which have obtained an unprecedented circulation not only in England, where every infamy finds a ready market, but in this country also. From Germany, a deeper and more dangerous influence extends. The light-minded infidelity of France chiefly corrupts the frivolous and the unthinking; but the infidelity of Germany, identified as it is with so many philosophical and even theological speculations, and invested with a spiritualized and mysterious semblance, seduces the intellects of the learned, of the reflecting, of those who exercise most influence upon the opinions of their age. The unintelligible speculations of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and

Strauss, who regards the life of the REDEEMER as a fable, and His very existence the mere embodiment of an idea, and repudiates the most momentous doctrines of Christianity, as errors which must be superseded by the advance of philosophy the daring speculations of Fuerbach, who pronounces the very existence of the DEITY a mere illusion or fiction of mind—the rationalist theories which destroy all revealed religion—the unintelligible reveries of transcendentalism, pantheism, and the other interminable creations of a daring and reckless speculation—the extravagant attempts of biblical disquisitions of Protestant divines in this country and in England are almost entirely borrowed, to explain away the miracles of the Gospel, to question its inspiration and authenticity, and to reduce it to a mere *mythus* or fable—all these desperate and blasphemous theories have not only converted the Protestantism of Germany into rationalism and atheism, but from the senseless popularity which German literature has attained in this country, they also threaten to produce an incalculable amount of mischief here also. And there are many significant indications that the same mischief is fermenting amid English literature and science. Such a production as the "Vestiges of Creation," affords a melancholy evidence of it. The literary foppery which has contributed so much to propagate infidelity in France, even now causes many of the shallow-minded and unthinking, who aspire to the character of philosophers, to affect free thinking and infidelity as a mark of superior enlightenment. Even in medical schools incalculable mischief is propagated. The connection between life and matter, and the dependence of mental phenomena on the physical state, is so close, and to all appearance so nearly identical, that a tendency towards materialism naturally enough accompanies the study of medical science; and the great absence of restraint in many of the institutions where that science is taught; often enables corrupt and wicked lecturers to confirm that tendency upon minds which, when debased by the vicious habits so prevalent amongst that class of students, gladly embrace the convenient doctrine as a temporary relief from the fears and reproaches of the agitated conscience—so that the proverb, "*ubi tres medici duo atheï*" is even more fatally verified at present than in the days of Sir Thomas Browne. Almost every department of natural science has been searched for objections against natural and revealed religion. The old armoury of unbelief is perpetually ransacked, and its contents furbished up again and again, and presented with appearance altered; and

it is much to be feared that the numbers of those who are willing to wield them are increasing fast; it is too certain that the name is legion even now, though many of them still treacherously rank themselves beneath the banner of the Church against which they often direct their poisoned shafts in secret. Whether the "gigantic scheme of godless education," in reference to which some traders in political speculation, who were once so clamorous, have now subsided into a marvellous repose, may swell the host of these adversaries, and give those principles which are now too widely scattered, a force and direction that may enable them to accomplish the work of destruction more securely, is a problem which time can alone resolve. At all events, the necessity of counteracting the influence of these principles is obvious. Catholic literature has been hitherto deficient in this respect, at least in those countries, although such splendid efforts have been made by Dr. Wiseman and a few others.

It has been often found a subject of inconvenience, that when it has been necessary to refer Catholics, who had been seduced into infidelity and scepticism, to some refutation of these theories, the works generally available to them for this purpose have been Protestant, and therefore inadequate to the solution of the difficulties: for, it may be repeated, that with the fundamental principle of Protestantism, the arguments of the infidel are unanswerable, as, when urged to its full extent, that principle must lead to the rejection of all the mysteries of Christianity. Moreover, whilst these works strive to eradicate infidel principles, they profusely scatter the seeds of scarce less dangerous doctrines. The present publication is in part put forward to remedy this deficiency in Catholic literature. Although it does not enter much into details—although it does not pursue infidelity in all its paths and by ways—although it does not accompany the fiend in his ambitious flight, when he tries to exalt his throne above the stars of God,* and to bring down from them false evidences against His everlasting truth, nor pursue him when he dives to explore the bowels of the earth, to find some contradiction there, or to investigate man's nature and constitution, in order to calumniate its Author—although it does not pry with him into the fictions of the past, or pore over the half obliterated inscriptions drawn by oriental fancy—although it does not enter into the minute tediousness of discussing the objections

* *Isaias* xiv. 13.

started against religion in every department of literature and science—it will no less effectually curb the soarings and restrain the wanderings of the daring spirit that presumes to excite the erring mind to revolt against everlasting truths; with a masterly power it pictures his intrinsic hideousness, and the ruinous effects of lending a credulous ear to his promptings, and thus prevents him from gaining hold of the affections—which is far more useful than the often unavailing efforts to dislodge him when he gains admission there. The attacks upon infidelity, therefore, which may seem destitute of practical value in this country, are not the least useful portions of the present volume.

The biographical notice is necessarily meagre and imperfect. A life like that of the Abbé Mac Carthy, almost entirely spent in seclusion, unrelieved by all variety of incident, and undistinguished by that attractive glare which dazzles the public eye, can afford but few details to gratify profane curiosity. The few and brief notices which have been given by his French biographers, have been manifestly written for those already acquainted with his career, and are therefore defective in many particulars which would interest readers in this country. The materials of the present notice are chiefly drawn from those biographies, and it therefore largely participates in their defects, besides adding too many others of its own.

On a perusal of the original, considerable disappointment must often be experienced at perceiving one view of a subject treated with a promise of pursuing another view of the same subject on a subsequent occasion; and in many instances it has been ascertained that these subjects were afterwards treated with the author's characteristic success; but unfortunately no copies of these discourses can now be had. All allusion to these subjects has been omitted in the translation; for to retain them, though they are deeply suggestive of important considerations, would awaken a regret which it is now impossible to allay. Each discourse is retained in its full integrity, the only retrenchment being, where complimentary allusions to the king and some other members of the "royal family" of France have been incidentally introduced in the original. The adoration of all that relates to royalty is so absurdly prevalent amongst ourselves—it is so lavishly bestowed where contempt and disgust are alone merited—that it is unnecessary to import any indications of a similar disposition. It is not long since a preacher—of course, "by law established"—degraded his office by a most blasphemous comparison between the Sa-

VIOUR OF THE WORLD and a foreign vagrant, whom a whole nation senselessly suffers to delude and plunder them. Although the praises bestowed by the Abbé MAC CARTHY were far more worthily bestowed than they could be here, such compliments reflect no credit on the preaching of the Gospel, and hence they are excluded from the present edition. The critical reader will not fail to perceive that in one or two instances additions have been made, towards the conclusion of sermons, which terminated abruptly in the original. The translation is as literal as a due regard for propriety and correctness of expression in English would allow. Perhaps its chief defect, amongst many others, is a crudeness of style, occasioned by too close an adhesion to the original. A variety of circumstances has conspired to produce other defects. There is, unfortunately too much reason to regret that the undertaking had not fallen into more skilful and practised hands; but the public must prefer to receive it, with all its imperfections, rather than it should longer remain a blank in the CATHOLIC LITERATURE OF IRELAND.

LIBRARY

SERMONS

FOR

SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS.

SERMON ON THE LAST JUDGMENT,

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

"And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty,"—*Luke* xxi. 27.

SHALL I declare to you, my brethren, without any further hesitation or reserve, what object I wish to attain by ascending this pulpit to-day? Shall I tell you that being struck with terror at the mere thought of the judgments which God will inflict upon the last day, I must endeavour to transfer that terror into your hearts: to arouse sinners, as it were, by a cry of alarm: and, if possible, to rescue them from their fatal lethargy before they shall find it changed into the sleep of everlasting death! Yes—learn it, you sinners, who hear me—it is not with the view of astonishing your imaginations by unmeaning images, or of producing feeble and transient emotions in your hearts, but with the hope of effecting your conversion and your salvation, that I shall exhibit to your view the most sublime and most awful spectacle that religion can offer to the eye of faith. In the zeal which animates me, I shall lay aside all that timid deference which worldly delicacy conceives it has a right to expect. Charity, itself, shall invest me with all the austerity of the ministry which I exercise; and although I am not unmindful of that courtesy which is due to the sensibility, or even to the weakness, of the great ones of this world—although I may sacrifice it by filling your hearts with anguish and alarm: I will not be sparing of harrowing descriptions and awful truths, which, perhaps, are alone capable of inspiring you with a becoming detestation of sin, a salutary disgust for the false pleasures and vanities which hurry you onward to destruction, and a firm and sincere resolution of leading such a life for the future as may obtain

for you a judgment of mercy. Ah! is it not better to make you grieve for a time, than suffer you to perish for eternity! And would I not be wanting in one of my most important duties towards you, if I delayed to examine whether it be painful to you, at present, to hear what will be so dreadful to endure hereafter?

Arm yourselves with courage, then, my brethren, to unite with me in contemplating this last and fearful scene, the bare thought of which, in former times, filled the deserts with anchorites, and compelled Jerome, though exhausted from works of sanctity; and Hilarion, though emaciated from fasts, and disciplines, and watchings, to tremble in the inmost depths of their solitudes.

But you may say, perhaps, that whereas every one of us is destined to receive an irrevocable sentence, which, even at the hour of death, must decide our fate for eternity, it is that judgment we ought to fear, without suffering our minds to be engrossed by the thoughts of that other judgment which will put an end to this world, and be nothing more than a solemn promulgation, and a confirmation of the previous one.

It is this question, my brethren, I propose to answer in the present discourse, by showing you how much the general judgment must add to the severity of the particular one, and by explaining to you how it fills up the measure of the Divine vengeance, and effects the complete abandonment of the sinner. Among the awful events which shall characterize that great day of justice, I select three leading circumstances, to which I beg to direct your undivided attention: the resurrection of the body, the manifestation of consciences, and the final decree which will establish an eternal separation between the elect and the reprobate. I maintain, first, that the resurrection of the body will be an aggravation of the unfortunate sinner's punishment; secondly, that the manifestation of consciences will be an oppressive weight of ignominy upon him; and, thirdly, that the final decree of separation, which will be pronounced by the lips of Jesus Christ himself, will be the consummation of his despair.

My brethren, this is a subject which is well worthy of your attention. You will shudder more than once at the sight of the awful vengeance of God. I shudder at it myself when I prepare to describe it to you. Let us with one accord implore the grace of meditating upon it now with so much profit that we may never have the misfortune to experience its severity. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—In the first place, then, I maintain that the resurrection of the body will be an aggravation of punishment for the sinner. Shall the infidel exclaim against the mention of resurrection, like those pagans to whom St. Paul announced the same doctrine eighteen centuries ago? Shall he inquire how is it possible that the dead can return to life; and where can they find their bodies to invest themselves with them anew? This is a weighty and perplexing question in the estimation of our affected sages; but it seemed so puerile and absurd to the great Apostle, that he proudly spurned those who were not ashamed to propose such a question, as stupid and senseless men. *Dicet aliquis, quomodo resurgunt mortui, qualive corpore veniunt? Insipiens!** What other answer could be given with propriety to such an objection? What! cannot He, indeed, who is able to give life and take it away, according as He pleaseth, also restore that life again, when the time which He has appointed shall have arrived? *Insipiens!* Cannot He who has brought forth the body of man out of nothing, bring it forth again from the dust? *Insipiens!* Oh, folly of the human intellect! Will the elements of this body be so widely scattered throughout every part of the universe—will they have undergone so many different transformations—will they be blended and confounded with so many elements of a different nature, that even the eye of the Creator himself will not be able to discern or recognise them, or His hand to reach and collect them? *Insipiens!* Must the just man be deprived of his reward, and must the sinner escape the punishment which he has deserved, because God will not be able to discover either of them amidst that heap of rubbish which death shall have amassed? And must they both escape alike from His anger and His love? Yet, O great God of heaven and earth! it is by such difficulties as these, that men imagine they can conquer Thy omnipotence, and confound Thy wisdom. These are the specious reasonings with which they assail the oracles of Thy eternal truth; these are the foundations upon which they build their theories, in opposition to Thy most awful and most undoubted threats. For our part, O Lord! we believe, without difficulty, that it is easy for Thee to do what it is impossible for us to comprehend; that Thou wilt reanimate, by a breath, what Thou hast created by a word; and that, because Thou hast declared it, *we shall all indeed arise again*,

* "Some men will say, how do the dead rise again? or with what manner of body shall they come?—Senseless man!"—1 *Cor.* xv. 31.

to receive, every one according to his works.* Let us consider, then, how this resurrection will be an increase of punishment to the sinner.

Cast into the dark prison of hell, from the moment he heaved his last sigh, he endures inexpressible torments in the midst of those fires which shall never be extinguished. It would seem that his misery has already reached its height; but his entire being does not yet suffer; his soul alone is a prey to those devouring flames. His body, that other portion of his being, remains insensible and inanimate on earth. His unhappy soul remembers, in the midst of her torments, that companion which had been so dear to her—with which she had been united during the most blissful period of their joint existence. How great was the happiness which she enjoyed in such society! All her miseries have dated their commencement from the period of separation. She knows that the revolution of years and of ages is destined to bring about a day which is known to God alone—a day on which that union which had been once so agreeable, must be renewed, and shall never more be interrupted. With anxious impatience she longs for that day, when she may at length experience some alleviation of her tortures. This last of days at length arrives; the stars in the firmament have already lost their light; the world has been purified by fire: the sound of the fatal trumpet suddenly reaches to the very bowels of the earth, and summons the dead of every generation to return to life once more. All nature is at once thrown into confusion; the whole creation is in travail to give birth to the human race, which is to be born anew. The dust of the tombs is put in motion: the scattered ashes are amalgamated; the bones are formed and joined together; flesh covers them at once; all the bodies of the children of men again appear with all their limbs, but they are as yet motionless and inanimate. At the same moment the souls hasten from their tenements to be united to their bodies, and to restore them again to life. Hell permits its victims to escape. The reprobate soul rushes from her dismal prison, and is transported with the rapidity of lightning to the spot where this body, which had been the object of so many regrets, and of so much affection, is about to be restored to her. In what condition will she find that body?

Let us consult the sacred Scriptures; what do we read in them? That at the last day each one shall reap what he had

* 1 *Cor.* xv. 51.

sown during life. *Quæ enim seminaverit homo hæc et metet.** That he who had lived in the corruption of sin, shall never be released from the corruption of death. *Qui seminat in carne sua, de carne et metet corruptionem.*† *Neque corruptio incorruptelam possidebit.* ‡ That all mankind must certainly come forth from the tomb, but that all will not be released from its terrors. *Omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur.*§ That the just shall arise again to a new and eternal life, but that the resurrection of the wicked will be a second death, worse than the first. *Hæc est mors secunda.*‖ That their bodies, by an awful combination of all that is terrible in life and death, will become the living food and never-dying prey of rottenness and worms. *Putredo et vermes hæreditabunt illum;*¶ *vindicta carnis impii ignis et vermis.***

If you have ever seen a dead body in the coffin, figure to yourself now that melancholy and hideous object, that livid paleness, those distorted features, that horrible dissolution, those exhalations of death, those worms which gnaw and consume their disgusting prey; such is the condition in which this body presents itself to the criminal soul, whose idol it had been, and which she desired with such ardent wishes, and so many sighs, to possess again. Oh, afflicting mistake! Oh, unutterable anguish! "What!" she exclaims, "is this that portion of my being which had been so dear to me—my old associate in my labours and my pleasures—in which I found so much grace and beauty—which I took so much care to decorate, whose inclinations were my sovereign law?" "The very same," replies an awful voice. "Recognize it, and renew that alliance which once possessed so many attractions for you." Alas! she shudders, she recoils; she is unable to endure either the sight of this carcass, or the infection which exhales from it; she desires to plunge again into the depths of the dark abyss, that she may escape from such a destructive union. But an invincible power prevents her escape, and

* "For what things a man shall sow, these also shall he reap."—*Galat.* vi. 8.

† "For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption."—*Ibid.*

‡ "Nor shall corruption possess incorruption."—1 *Cor.* xv. 50.

§ "We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed."—*Ibid.* 51.

‖ "This is the second death"—*Apoc.* xx. 14.

¶ "Rottenness and worms shall inherit him."—*Ecclesti.* xix. 3.

** "The vengeance on the flesh of the ungodly is fire and worms."—*Ibid.* vii. 19.

thrusts her forward towards that odious object, to which she must be again united by ties that can never more be severed. In the excess of her anguish and despair, she exclaims – "Oh, wretched being! thou wert destined to be the cause of what is more intolerable to me than even hell itself! Oh, habitation of infection and filth! oh, detestable mass of corruption, what terror do you not cause me! To approach you merely is a dreadful chastisement; what must it not be to enter into you, to dwell within you." Then, making a dreadful application of those words which the prophet had used in a very different sense. "This," she continues, "is the place of my rest, for ever and ever. *Hæc requies mea in sæculum sæculi* * This is the habitation which I have prepared for myself, which I have deliberately chosen: this is what I have preferred to my God, to my conscience, to a never-ending happiness; this is the abominable flesh with which I was willing to identify myself during life. How often have I not desired, in the excess of my madness, to be able to change my nature, to divest myself of my spiritual being, and of every privilege which it conferred upon me, that I may destroy myself, and bury myself in this mire. Thus it is, O terrible God, that Thou dost punish me by fulfilling my senseless wishes." *Hic habitabo, quoniam elegi eam.*†

In the midst of all these groans and lamentations, struggling in vain against an irresistible power, she enters into this body of death, and again endows it with life, to the mutual torment of both. The flames by which the soul is devoured, communicate themselves instantaneously to the body; they eagerly seize upon their new victim: they encircle it; they penetrate into it; they rush like a torrent through every vein, through the entrails, through the very marrow of the bones; and the soul endures multiplied torments from every part of this burning body. How is it possible to describe those eyes, blazing with the fire of hell, and the rueful looks which they cast around on every side—those scalding tears that shall never cease to flow—that hideous mouth, and its horrible gnashing of teeth, which begins, never more to end—that countenance, upon which a ray of divine beauty formerly shone, but which, in its monstrous deformity, now bears the resemblance of the very devils, those frightful members, and the intolerable stench of death which they diffuse all around them. Whithersoever

* *Ps.* cxxi. 14.

† "Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it."—*Ibid.*

this animated carcass turns its footsteps, there is a universal dispersion and flight—as at the approach of some spectre, or disgusting monster. *Et erit omnis qui viderit te resiliet a te.** Oh, what a change, my brethren! Perhaps this was some great man, about whose person, when upon earth, every one was busy to obtain the honour of one of his looks, or one of his smiles. Perhaps this other was one of those who are so amiable in the eyes of the world, who formed the attraction of every society, who was sought after every where, out of whose company no real or perfect pleasure could be found. This was perhaps a celebrated beauty, whose presence was sufficient to attract universal attention, who gloried in captivating every heart, who received incense like a deity. Alas! what abandonment, what neglect, what universal manifestations of contempt and aversion, do they not all experience now? Ah! figure to yourselves two reprobates after a criminal attachment to each other here below— after having sworn an eternal fidelity to each other in the intoxication of their insane passion, meeting each other in such a plight upon the last day. What mutual disgust and aversion! what reproaches and imprecations against each other! what anguish and despair at having sacrificed themselves, without the possibility of recovery, to what they can no longer refrain from detesting! With how great shame are they not overwhelmed by the recollection of those abominable pleasures which had been the object of their guilty union, and the only tie which bound them together! How furious but how ineffectual is their desire to tear and to destroy each other!

Such, then, will be the literal and dreadful fulfilment of this prophetic expression of the Scripture, *The Lord Almighty will take revenge on them: in the day of judgment he will visit them.*† After having brought forth their bodies from the grave, to consign them to a second death, He will send fire into their flesh to burn them, and worms to devour them. *Dabit enim ignem et vermes in carnes eorum.* And because this fire will never be extinguished, and these worms will never die, these carcasses will live for ever in a condition worse than death, and must experience the horrors of such a dreadful punishment for all eternity. *Dabit enim ignem et vermes in carnes eorum, ut urantur et sentiant usque in sempiternum.*‡

* "And it shall come to pass, that every one that shall see thee shall flee from thee."—*Nah.* iii. 7. † *Judith* xvi. 20.

‡ "For he will give fire and worms into their flesh, that they may burn and may feel for ever."—*Ibid.* 21.

If such a picture makes you shudder, my brethren—if you be tempted to complain, because I have ventured merely to delineate it before your imagination—if you cannot endure the bare idea of it, what will it be to witness the reality? What do I say? What will it be if you yourselves, on a future day, afford the dreadful spectacle which I have described? Oh, ye worldlings, who hear me! behold the end of these vain amusements; of these manifold sensualities in which you spend your lives; of these niceties and this refinement upon which you pride yourselves; of this unceasing care which you bestow upon your persons; of this slavish subserviency to your tastes, your appetites, and all the inclinations of nature; of this effeminacy of manners; of this affectation in dress; of these scandalous nudities; of these familiarities, so full of danger; of these acquaintances which have passion alone for their connecting link; of this gratification of your own will, in thinking, and seeing, and hearing, and saying, and doing whatever you please; of this forgetfulness of the holy law of God, and of the dignity of man, to degrade yourselves to the instincts and enjoyments of the brute. This is what St. Paul, in his energetic and divine language, describes as sowing in the corruption of the flesh; and to all those who shall have sown—that is to say, to all those who shall have lived—in this manner, he proclaims that on the day of justice they must reap, in their bodies raised up to life, corruption and death as their only fruit. *Qui seminat in carne sua, de carne et metet corruptionem.** But those (he adds) who shall have sown in purity of mind—those who shall have led a life of virtue and innocence—will reap a blessed and immortal existence in pure and glorious bodies. *Qui autem seminat in spiritu, de spiritu metet vitam æternam.*†

We, therefore, entreat you to take compassion, not only upon your souls, which you so basely sacrifice to ignominious passions, but also upon your bodies, which you love with such tender and blind affection. Think of that punishment which you are treasuring up for them by flattering them with such cowardly and criminal indulgence. They are victims which you are fattening for the day of wrath. Alas! is it not enough that in punishment of the original sin in which they have been conceived, they should be condemned to that

* "For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption."—*Galat.* vi. 8.

† "He that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting."—*Ibid.*

first death which is inevitable for all -a death so dreadful from the sufferings which accompany it, and the horrible dissolution which follows it? Will you devote them again, by new voluntary sins, to a second death, infinitely more dreadful—a death whose consequences must be eternal? Will you, then, be the executioners and the most merciless enemies of yourselves! What answer can you make—you who have yet time to guard against this danger? Who has promised you to-morrow? Who can promise it to you, or satisfy you that this very night may not be your last? Do you expect to find peace of mind in the doubts and objections of the infidel? But what will objections and doubts avail you then? Will they change the decrees of the Eternal one?—will they restrain His power?—will they prevent the fulfilment of His unerring threats? Persuade yourself if you can it your madness may carry you to such a length, that the grave is an asylum whither the Divine vengeance will not be able to pursue you or to overtake you; but will such a persuasion lessen its power to break open that asylum, to drag you forth from it, to carry you before the tribunal of an irritated Deity, and to consign you to those avenging flames which his breath shall kindle? Will you feel the heat of these flames less intensely, because you refused to believe in the truth of their existence? Will you maintain that God is too merciful to make us endure a twofold death; that one is sufficient for his justice, and that it puts an end to everything for man? On this principle, therefore, the same destiny must await the innocent and the guilty, the pious adorer and the infidel, the assassin and his victim, the plunderer and the widow or the orphan whom he had despoiled, the oppressor of mankind, and the benefactor of their race; they must all die alike, once and forever, while neither hope for one nor fear for the other can exist beyond the grave. On this principle, the chaste and mortified body of the just man, which had been the instrument of a virtuous soul for the performance of good works of every kind—which had, perhaps, been sacrificed by a glorious martyrdom in vindication of the cause of God himself—and the impure body of the sinner, defiled by incests, adulteries, rapine, murder—perhaps by parricide —will be swallowed up in the same tomb, devoured by the same worms, and confounded together in the same dust for ever. No, no! This cannot be; all the Divine attributes assure me of the contrary; reason convinces me of it no less clearly than faith. The first death is common to all, because it is the expiation of a sin which is common to the whole race

of Adam; but another order of things must come to pass in which every one shall receive according to the merit of his works, and death will be for the wicked alone, and life for the just alone. And, oh! my brethren, that life and death are very different, indeed, from those which bear the same names here below. That life is one whose happiness we cannot describe, and that death is one whose misery we cannot conceive; never-decaying youth, dazzling beauty, joy ineffable, happiness without alloy or limitation—such will be the new life of the elect raised to glory, misery and torments without number, devouring and eternal flames, frightful deformity, corruption worse than the corruption of the grave—such will be the second death of the reprobate. Either this life or this death must be your future portion, my dear friends, whom I now address. Make your choice of one or the other this moment. Time is now afforded you that you may be enabled to avoid one and to merit the other. This is man's great and only concern. Perhaps you are now beginning to comprehend its entire importance. To make you still more sensible of it, I shall continue to describe the events of the last day; and as I have already proved to you that the resurrection of the body will be an aggravation of the sinner's punishment, I shall proceed to show that the manifestation of consciences will be an excess of ignominy to him.

II.—It might appear that nothing could be wanting to complete the ignominy of the sinner after the moment when the ties of the body were severed, and, after having been arraigned before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge, he has been convicted of his crimes, and branded with the sentence of eternal reprobation. But, how great soever the confusion which overwhelms him may then be, it is unknown by at least the greater part of creatures. Buried with himself in the dismal darkness of hell, it has no witnesses except the wretched beings who are sharers in his sufferings, and God, who necessarily beholds all things. Perhaps the memory of this miserable man is still honoured upon earth; perhaps his ashes still repose there in a magnificent tomb; perhaps histories are filled with his name, and kingdoms resound with his praises. It is only on the day of justice that this phantom of glory will vanish, and leave no trace behind it; it is only then the sinner shall see himself deprived of even the least remnant of honour, reputation, or regard; then shall he drain the chalice of infamy, even to the very dregs.

Now, my brethren, how disgraceful must it not be to appear before the whole world, dragging along his hideous and

impure carcass, which makes man an object of aversion to every eye, and stamps him so palpably with the seal of hell? Yet this is but a very feeble prelude indeed to the humiliations which are to follow. God is about to fulfil the threat which He uttered by the lips of his prophets. "Perverse man! thou hast imagined that I would be like thyself, that I would dissemble thy iniquities; come now, that I may exhibit them in the broad daylight, and that I may overwhelm thee with the confusion which thou meritest. *Arguam te, et statuam contra faciem tuam* * I will show thy nakedness to every nation, and thy disgrace to every people. *Ostendam . . . . nuditatem tuam et . . . . ignominiam tuam.*† I will heap thy crimes and thy abominations upon thy head; I will stamp them upon thy forehead, and upon every member of thy body; I will cover thee all over with the mire of thy secret disorders. *Ponas tuas putida super te, et abominationes tua in medio tui conspicies.*‡ In this condition I will abandon thee to the ridicule and reproaches of every creature; and in the excess of thy degradation thou shalt learn that I am a God who cannot be defied in vain. *Et contumeliis te afficiam.*§ *Et scietis quia ego Dominus.*‖

Behold this just and terrible God tearing away every veil which had covered this corrupt heart, searching with His omnipotent hand into the very bottom of this abyss of iniquities, and drawing out of its depths an alarming multitude of monsters and reptiles—that is to say, of disorders and crimes, the mere sight of which terrifies the sinner himself. *Illic reptilia quorum non est numerus.*¶ Among these, there appear many evil thoughts, many filthy imaginations, many detestable desires, many shameful ideas, many criminal desires and deeds of darkness, which have succeeded each other almost without interruption during a long series of years, and occupied the whole course of a worldly and disorderly life. There envy, jealousy, hatred, revenge, treachery, black intrigues, falsehoods, atrocious calumnies, sanguinary desires and conspiracies exhibit themselves. There may be seen the

* "Thou thoughtest unjustly that I shall be like to thee; but I will reprove thee, and set before thy face."—*Ps.* xlix. 21.

† "I will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms."—*Nah.* iii. 5.

‡ "I will lay thy ways upon thee; and thy abominations shall be in the midst of thee."—*Ezech.* vii. 4.

§ "And I will cast abominations upon thee, and will disgrace thee, and will make an example of thee."—*Nah.* iii. 6.

‖ "And you shall know that I am the Lord."—*Ezech.* vii. 4.

¶ "There are creeping things without number."—*Ps.* ciii. 25.

sins of infancy, of early youth, of mature years, of disorderly old age—the sins of every day, of every hour, of every moment—each individual's own sins, and the sins of others, of which each person had been the occasion, the instrument, or the cause—sins which had been unknown or forgotten until then—sins which those who committed disguised from themselves, and many which they elevated into virtues—sins of every kind, of every sense, and every member of the body—sins of all the powers and faculties of the soul—enormous sins, and sins which are even nameless—all come forward and exhibit themselves at the same time, so that out of such a countless multitude not even a solitary sin can escape the eyes of the whole universe, and not even one of those circumstances which are most humiliating and oppressive to the sinner will be omitted, disguised, or attenuated. *Imponam tibi omnia scelera tua, et non parcet oculus meus, nec miserebor.**

Who will be able to endure this awful manifestation? Then must the mask of the hypocrite, and all the audacity of the shameless sinner, disappear together. Ah! what is this I see? That man who seemed so scrupulous about honour and probity, who had the names of them every moment upon his lips, who affected so much disinterestedness and integrity in all his dealings, to whom every one was anxious to confide a trust, and to consign the dearest interests to his care—that man was an impostor. The honourable reputation which he enjoyed was altogether owing to his duplicity, his artifices and a villainous combination of sagacious and profound perversity. The whole world must know his villainy, his intrigues, his perjuries, and his plunderings. *Ostendam gentibus nuditatem tuam et regnis ignominiam tuam.*† That magistrate who was believed to be incorruptible—who, in a degenerate age, was admired as an illustrious relic of primitive integrity and scrupulous exactness—made justice a matter of traffic in private, and amassed a fortune at the expense of oppressed innocence. The whole world must know that abominable traffic by which he dealt in the blood and tears of the widow and the orphan; they will thoroughly see through the baseness and obduracy of that venal and corrupt heart. *Ostendam gentibus nuditatem tuam et regnis ignominiam tuam.* That wife who imposed herself as a model of conjugal affection and

* "I will lay upon thee all thy crimes; and my eye shall not spare; neither shall I show mercy."—*Ezech.* vii. 8, 9.

† "I will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms."—*Nahum* iii. 5.

fidelity—who concentrated upon herself the undivided esteem and affection of a virtuous and too-confiding husband was an adulteress; under a most specious exterior, she conceived a hatred of every obligation, a mortal indifference for all that nature commanded her to love, most shameful propensities, and habits of a most ignominious character. The whole world must learn the disorders of her heart, its perfidiousness and its profligacy. *Ostendam gentibus nuditatem tuam et regnis ignominiam tuam.* That young person, whose gentleness, piety, and modesty were so loudly extolled, who was so often seen prostrate in the tribunal of penance and at the foot of the altars—did not walk in sincerity before the Lord: she deceived a charitable confessor, and parents who were too blind to her defects; she abused all that is most sacred in religion, the more effectually to conceal these passions and disorders which she cannot now conceal from the eyes of the Almighty. The whole world must know her shameful weaknesses, her dissimulation, and her sacrileges. *Ostendam gentibus nuditatem tuam et regnis ignominiam tuam.*

Thus, shall all hypocrites be unmasked and confounded. But you, shameless sinner, audacious libertine! who seem to glory in your iniquities—you who bid an open defiance to Heaven, and in the effort to shake off all the restraints of shame, deny even that any distinction exists between vice and virtue—you flatter yourself perhaps that it will be easy for you to endure the overwhelming confusion of that day. What! have you not also a hypocrisy peculiar to yourself? Have you not your own mysteries of iniquity and shame at which you are forced to blush in secret, which you studiously conceal in the bottom of your own heart, and are unwilling to allow your most intimate acquaintances to unfold. Let us speak in good earnest. Upon those very occasions when you most audaciously boast of your excesses and disorders, do you ever tell the whole truth, or exhibit yourself as you really are, without disguise or concealment? No! if it were the will of God, at this present moment, to lay open to me your conscience from its very bottom, and if he commanded me to relate, in presence of this assembly, I will not say the history of your whole life, but merely your actions of such a month, of such a year, of such a day in particular—if I revealed, I will not say all your actions and thoughts since you came into this world, but merely—and mark this well—that particular grovelling and detestable sentiment which you have conceived and nourished within your breast, that particular act of treachery or baseness which you have committed,

that disposition, that propensity which holds you in subjection, that abject, ignominious, revolting situation to which passion has forced you to humble yourself in that particular circumstance—it would be sufficient to make you drop down dead with shame and sorrow. And why speak of your fortitude, you who are the slave of the basest and most feeble pride that can be conceived—you who have not even so much courage as to discover the wounds of your soul, under the most inviolable of all secrets, to a solitary man, a minister of the charity of God—you whose entire unbelief, and aversion to the faith of your fathers, has, perhaps, no other principle or foundation except the terror into which you are thrown by the bare idea of once confessing your sins, to obtain forgiveness for them in the tribunal of mercy?

What then must become of you at this other most awful tribunal, which will hold its deliberations in presence of Heaven and earth, when an enraged and Omnipotent Judge will make manifest, to the despair of your pride, not merely all that you know about your disorders, but moreover all that you do not know, and all that you have forgotten respecting them—when He will awaken those monsters that have been lulled to sleep, and bring to life those which seemed already dead—when He will search and unfold every labyrinth of your heart, and bring forth from it all that you were unable or unwilling to see there with your own eyes—when every word that has escaped from your lips during the whole course of your life, every shadowy phantom of your imagination, every secret act of your will, every look, every motion every desire, every intention, every project will be produced again to your confusion—when he shall dissipate every shadow under which you concealed yourself, and penetrate every barrier behind which you sought for shelter, and unfold that lengthened series of baseness and infamy which have dishonoured you in your capacity as a man, and still more in your capacity as a Christian—when he shall bring to light abominations which perhaps paganism would have detested, at which even nature shuddered—when, in this state of abjection, in this deep depravity, He shall exhibit the true cause of your impiety, of your blasphemies, and of this affected contempt of virtue which you would fain exhibit as fortitude of soul and superiority of intellect—when, in fine, He will stamp upon you the peculiar and distinctive mark of every one of your crimes as so many indelible stigmas—when He shall cover you all over with the filth of your passions and vices, and exhibit you in that condition

to the whole world as a spectacle of horror and disgrace? *Et projiciam super te abominationes . . . et ponam te in exemplum.**

Now, my brethren, behold the sinner branded, degraded from his inheritance, covered with so many horrible stigmas, and compelled to exhibit himself in such a condition, not in the brightness of the material sun, but amid the dazzling rays of the eternal Sun of Justice—in the light of God, which is nothing else than the reflection of his infinite purity and sanctity—a light which is formidable even to the elect—in which the Angels find that they are not pure enough; it is in the midst of such dazzling brightness, that this unfortunate man, *covered with confusion as with a cloak*,† is compelled to encounter the looks of the most august and most numerous assembly that ever existed, and to stand in presence of all the orders of heavenly spirits and of the triumphant elect. He is obliged to endure the contrast between his own degradation and ignominy and their glory and splendour. To make satisfaction for his sacrilegious ridicule and derision, he in his turn is forced to bear with their well-merited disdain, and that dreadful hissing of which the Scriptures speak,‡ and that severe and oppressive irony. This, then, is the man who rose up in rebellion against God, who sounded the trumpet, and declared war against the Almighty, who considered us to be so foolish because we relied upon His promises. Let him tell us now that religion is a vain fancy, and that unbelief is wisdom. *Et super eum ridebunt . . . et dicent, ecce homo qui non posuit Deum Adjutorem suum.*‡

To the reproaches of the just shall succeed the complaints, the threats, the accusations of the accomplices and victims of his disorders. I see them fall upon him from every side, like avenging furies, asking him, in accents of despair, to restore their soul and their eternity, which he had been the cause of their having lost. I hear howlings and imprecations, which make me shudder. "It is you, vile seducer, plundered me of all that was most precious—my honour and my virtue; you, by your base artifices, and detestable passion, have dragged me along with yourself into this abyss of every woe." "It is you, immodest woman, who, by enkindling an impure fire within my bosom, have left me a prey to everlasting flames." "It is you, unnatural father, barbarous mother, have given

* "And I will cast abominations upon thee, and I will disgrace thee, and I will make an example of thee."—*Nahum* iii. 6.

† "*Ps.* cviii. 29.

‡ "They shall laugh at him, and say: Behold the man that made not God his keeper."—*Ps.* li. 8, 9.

me the first example of irreligion and licentiousness; instead of restraining my growing passions, you have, on the contrary, rather hastened their development, and broken off all restraint from them. My reprobation is your work." "It is from you, detestable wife, I have learned such infamous lessons of vice: by means of an honourable and sacred union, you have laid a fatal snare for my innocence; our united efforts ought to have been directed to save our souls, but you have preferred that we should both perish. See what a husband owes to his affection for you." But who can describe the innumerable multitude of the unhappy reprobates, who rise up enraged against the public corrupters of morality and faith, against the authors and venders of obscene and impious books—against all those who have made science, arts, their talents, their industry, their influence, subservient to the triumph of vice or error—who have opened these copious and inexhaustible springs, at which men of every generation, of every rank, of every country, shall assemble, even to the end of time, to carry away, and imbibe in copious draughts, that poison which kills the soul. I see whole generations and nations seduced, deluded, perverted, by this heresiarch, by this licentious poet, by this preacher of atheism, madly pursuing the author of their ruin, accusing him of his impostures, his obscenities, his blasphemies, and, with loud cries, imploring the justice of Heaven against that man who indulged in the impious sport of precipitating so many thousands into hell.

But among all the voices that are raised against the sinner, the most violent and most terrible is that which issues from his own bosom. Yes! his conscience, which he had always stifled during his life time, which he prevented from groaning or complaining in secret, set free at length, and restored to all its rights, enraged and furious, roars like a lion, and terrifies and subdues him in its turn. This witness which he cannot silence, this inexorable accuser, this furious domestic enemy, audibly relates his iniquities and infamies, through the very lips of the culprit himself, and paints in the blackest colours his hatred of all good, his love of evil, his constant resistance to the light of his own reason, his invariable contempt and abuse of the Divine graces, his ingratitude and hatred towards the Author of his being. Then it is, that, heaping reproaches and imprecations upon himself—seeing no monster in the whole universe more detestable than himself—not knowing where to conceal his shame—he invokes death and annihilation: he conjures the mountains and hills

to fall upon him, and to bury such a mass of wickedness beneath their ruins. But all in vain; he must live to see and to detest himself for ever, to bear the intolerable burden of unbounded confusion and disgrace for all eternity. *Erigilabunt in opprobrium, ut videant semper.* Such, then, is the excess of disgrace which the sinner must endure from the manifestation of consciences. In addition to this I have merely to show, in a few words, the consummation of his despair, in the last sentence which the supreme Judge will pronounce.

III. The Judge has not yet appeared. But from the earliest moments of that dreadful day, has not everything apprised the sinner that he can expect nothing but inexorable severity? The appalling deformity of that body, which has been restored to him, the rigorous and oppressive manifestation of his most secret iniquities, the confusion with which he is overwhelmed, the aversion which all creatures testify towards him—do not all these announce to him, distinctly enough, what the decision of the supreme arbiter of his destiny must be in his regard? Has any one of his friends or relatives condescended to feel an interest in his favour? Has any one of those saints, who had formerly been so zealous for his salvation, so deeply affected by his wanderings, so full of indulgence, of charity, of tenderness, condescended even to cast a look of compassion upon him? The very sinners who resemble him, and the accomplices of his crimes, have become his most merciless enemies. What do I say? Inanimate nature itself declares war against him. All the elements exhibit a most striking manifestation of their hatred, in a manner peculiar to themselves. The earth groans beneath his feet, and manifests an impatience to reject him from its bosom; the sea, swelling beyond its limits, terrifies him with the menacing sound and dreadful agitation of its waves; the sky roars above his head, and presents him with nothing but thunders; the whole creation conspire to thrust him into hell. *Pugnabit eum illo orbis terrarum contra insensatos.**

In the meantime, the sacred sign of redemption shines aloft in the air, with an agreeable splendour; but for him alone that sign of salvation and mercy is a signal of reprobation and wrath. He shudders at the mere sight of it. "There," he exclaims, "is that cross which I have so often insulted and blasphemed, but which now triumphs along with those who have adored it. There is that cross, crimsoned for my sake with the blood of a God—that cross, which ought to be the source of all my hope

* "The whole world shall fight with Him against the unwise."—*Wisd.* v. 21.

and consolation, but which now comes to aggravate my terror and despair! There is that cross, which leaves no excuse for my guilt, which proves the justice of all these torments I endure! because, though I was marked with its seal by baptism, I have had no other sentiments towards it than those of a Jew and an idolater; I also have nailed Him, who is about to judge me, to that cross, as well as they have done. What right have I to ask or to expect forgiveness?

The last act of this great and awful tragedy at length approaches. The brilliant cloud, which bears the Divine Son of man, appears in the firmament, and attracts universal admiration. More beautiful than the morning star—a thousand times more brilliant than the sun—adorned with such glory and majesty as no mortal intellect can conceive—invested with a power, in comparison with which the authority of all the monarchs of this world are as nothing—surrounded by myriads of Angels, and an ocean of light—the supreme Judge of the living and the dead is seated upon his throne. After a short interval of silence, commanded through respect, shouts of triumph, hymns of joy, loud acclamations of praises, which shake the vault of heaven, ascend from every side. The glorified elect, beholding for the first time with their corporeal eyes, the adorable humanity of THE WORD MADE FLESH contemplating that ravishing and ineffable beauty, that countenance, upon which all the perfections of the Divinity, with all the virtues of man, are represented—are no longer capable of containing the transports of their joy and love. They exult with delight! soaring aloft at once, like eagles, into the midst of the air, they fly into the arms of their Saviour, and, inebriated with heavenly delights, they take their position at his right hand. Meanwhile, the sullen, disconsolate, trembling sinner, with his eyes fixed upon the dust which he moistens with bitter tears, is thrust along with the vile society of Satan towards the left. There he hears the virtues proclaimed, and the victory celebrated, of those whom he had despised, calumniated, or persecuted upon earth; he hears the King of Glory, who, in accents full of tenderness and affection, styles them Blessed of his Father, and invites them to share his inheritance, and take possession of his kingdom. Dark envy at all their happiness consumes the sinner, and embitters his punishment. To aggravate his mortification and anguish to the utmost, he recognizes among them the old associates of his guilt, who had returned to God by a sincere conversion, washed their sins in the blood of the Lamb, and to the end of their lives remained faithful to that grace which had reconciled them,

and now reign along with that glorious and happy society. He is a witness of the rapture with which they celebrate their passions conquered, their fetters broken, their souls regenerated by penance, their labours, their austerities, their salutary tears, heaven gained at last, and their happiness secured for ever, at the cost of such trifling sacrifices. At such a spectacle he is unable to restrain his cries and groans "Ah! unhappy wretch that I am," he says to himself, striking his breast, and tearing himself with his own hands, "could not I do what has been done by these others, who had the same propensities, the same prejudices, the same errors, the same habits, and the same vices as myself! Had not I the same lights, the same remorse, the same graces which have saved them? Senseless and insane being that I was, instead of following their example, I have made their conversion the subject of my foolish and indecent sarcasms; they despised my contempt; the whole universe applauds their triumphs this day; and here am I for all eternity, the detestation and outcast of all creation." Whilst he abandons himself to the anguish of these tormenting thoughts, the Just Judge, after having crowned all the saints, turns towards the reprobate. Oh, my God! who can conceive the terror of these wretches, and the new torment which they feel at the moment when Thy Divine visage, inflamed with anger, shoots all its rays upon them, like a burning sun; when Thy looks, like so many darts of fire, pierce their vitals and consume them. It is to this Thy Prophet alluded, when he said, that Thou wouldst set them on fire, like furnaces, on that day, which he styles the day of Thy enraged visage. *Pones eos ut clibanum ignis in tempore vultus tui.** But what is to become of them? What violent trembling seizes upon them, and agitates them, like the leaves of the forest, when Thy terrific voice, shaking the foundations of the world, and bringing consternation to their inmost souls, makes them hear these dreadful words: *—Discedite a me maledicti!* "I now break for ever all the ties which united the Creator to rebellious creatures, the Father to unnatural children, the thrice holy God to incorrigible sinners. Depart from Me!—from Me who gave you existence and life—who formed you to my likeness, and destined you to be sharers in my own happiness; from Me, who formed for your benefit all this beautiful universe, in which the multiplied favours which I lavished upon you in such profusion, were only a pledge and

* "Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire in the time of thy anger." —*Ps.* xx. 10.

a feeble prelude of those joys which I prepared for you in My kingdom; from Me, who bore with your ingratitude and your insults so long—who pardoned your crimes so often—who pursued you by My grace—who, through the hope of overcoming your obduracy, prolonged from year to year, that existence which you invariably abused; from Me, who loved you so tenderly, as even to offer myself a victim for your sake, to weep, to suffer, to die for you, and who could obtain nothing but your hatred in return; from Me, the only author of every blessing, who, rejected by you, reject you again in My turn, and abandon you a prey to all sorts of evils; from Me, who am benediction itself: but I solemnly curse you this day. Unfortunate man! you have loved malediction; you have chosen it for your inheritance; may it abide with you for ever!" *Maledicti!* At this word, a terrible voice issues from the throne of God, and resounds through the highest heavens; another re-echoes it with a dreadful roaring from the abyss of hell; another comes forth from the four quarters of the earth, and they all repeat together "Malediction, woe, *Maledicti!*" "Begone, then, far from me," resumes the supreme Judge, "to the abode of eternal misery—to that place where there are no limits to torture, and no end to desolation; where the fire is ever burning and never consumes; where a never-dying worm devours, and never destroys: where there is not left so much as the consolation of being able to hope for death. *Discedite a me in ignem æternum.* These frightful prisons have not been created for man, the beloved work of My Father's hands, but for the rebellious angel, your enemy and mine. You are well aware that dark hatred exasperated him against you; that the damnation of the human race was the only object of his desires; and you have preferred him to your God. Not content with falling into all his snares, and piercing yourselves with all his darts, you have, moreover, conspired with him in his plots against mankind, and against Me also; you have become the seducers of your brethren, the corrupters of innocence, the calumniators of virtue, the persecutors of piety, the devils of the earth, the ministers, the instruments, the organs of the prince of darkness; and it is but just that you should share his fate, after having embraced his cause and performed his work. *Discedite . . . . . in ignem æternum qui paratus est diabolo est angelis ejus.**

* "Depart from me into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."—*Matt.* xxv. 41.

After having pronounced this decree, directing towards those miserable beings a parting look, on which indignation and pity are depicted, He turns away from them for ever; and after having dispelled the clouds which hung upon His brow, He fixes his eye upon the assembly of the just, with a smile full of sweetness and majesty, which makes heaven and earth rejoice. The never-ending canticle of praise and thanksgiving, in which all creatures join, immediately begins. At the sound of these concerts the heavens throw open their portals, and display their entire magnificence to the enraptured eyes of the elect, who ascend into the air, accompanied by Angels, and enter in the train of the Lamb into the everlasting Jerusalem, which resounds with their reiterated acclamations of joy and triumph.

Whilst the reprobate contemplate this spectacle in sullen silence, oh! appalling contrast!—the earth gives way round them, and hell, displaying the depths of its prisons, demands its victims with expanded jaws! Then it is that these unfortunate beings, examining the dreadful depths of that abyss which is about to swallow them, and feeling more conscious than ever of the awful nature of their destiny, which they contrast with the happiness of the just, can fix no limits to their despair. Strength and courage abandon them altogether, their hearts are broken; they burst into torrents of tears, and raising their eyes for the last time towards that heavenly country which they shall never more behold, recognising among those who now enter it, their friends, their fellow citizens, their relatives—looking upon the places which had been prepared for themselves, but which others now occupy—all the acuteness and intensity of feeling with which they had ever been endued, revives at the moment of this desolating separation, and they exclaim, in a voice stifled by sobs and groans, "Farewell, paradise of delights, admirable city of the living God, abode of peace, of glory, and happiness, for which we had been created, and from which our crimes irretrievably banish us! Farewell, Father of Mercies, whose children we no longer are; Divine Saviour, who recognisest us no more as thy brethren; Spirit of Love, whom we have compelled to hate us! Farewell, adorable Redeemer, who hast shed all thy blood in vain to preserve us from these miseries to which our own madness has consigned us! Farewell, incomparable Virgin, mother of all the living, whom we choose to have as an enemy rather than as a mother; holy patrons, who once obtained for us so many graces, which our own obduracy has rendered unavailing; Angel guardians and protectors whom we

have abandoned, to unite ourselves with those monsters to whom we have now fallen a prey! Farewell you all, whose memory is most tender and torments us most—virtuous friends, whose advice and example we have despised—Christian parents, who so often entreated us, with tears, to have mercy upon ourselves, and we would not hear you—beloved spouses, to whom we were united by such endearing ties, from whom our infidelity has separated us for ever! Farewell, all you happy inhabitants of heaven! Hell claims us as its portion! Farewell, bright day of eternity! we descend into a night that shall never end. Farewell, joy, peace, consolation, hope—farewell for ever! Torments, desolation, and despair must be our inheritance for ever more!" At these words they sink into the burning prison house, which groans as it swallows up its prey. The gates of the abyss are closed upon them, never more to open. All is consummated. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

I have not strength to add any more. May the sincerity of your conversion, my brethren, your faithful co-operation with Divine grace, and the infinite mercy of the Lord, preserve you from such an awful destiny! This is a blessing which I wish you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE WORD OF GOD.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."—*John* i. 23.

ALTHOUGH the humility of the holy precursor may seem to be, and really is, worthy of our admiration, when, on this day, he repudiates those magnificent titles which the synagogue seems so ready to decree in his favour, we must, nevertheless, admit that he renders a glorious testimony in his own behalf, and that he conveys a most sublime idea of his ministry, when he exclaims—"The voice which you hear in this desert is not my voice; it is not the voice of a mere mortal; but I myself am the voice and the organ of Him who is every where present, though unseen, and never ceases to speak to mankind and to say to them—'Prepare my ways. I descend amongst you, through compassion and mercy. Appear in my presence by

penance and by love.'" *Ego vox clamantis in deserto, Dirigite viam Domini.*

Was it possible for John to state in less equivocal terms, that his word was the word of God himself? But, my brethren, what has been the result of that Divine preaching, which ought to have produced such powerful effects? Multitudes, it is true, assembled from all quarters to listen to this extraordinary mortal, and the banks of the Jordan could scarce contain the crowds of hearers who thronged around him. But, in every other respect, if we except a few docile spirits who availed themselves of his instructions, what benefit was derived from these instructions, by that countless multitude which seemed to look for them with so much avidity? Some, influenced by a vain curiosity, rather than by an humble faith, confined themselves to mere barren admiration of the prophet; and satisfied with applauding his discourse, they cared neither to practise what he taught, nor to amend their lives. *Venit Joannes, ... et non credidistis ei, ... nec pœnitentiam habuistis.** Others, blinded by pride, could only find a subject for derision and censure in the austerity of his life, and in the mysteries which he proclaimed; they despised him, and in the excess of their folly, they regarded this angel of God, — for such do the Scriptures designate him—as the instrument and the vile sport of the very devils. *Venit Joannes, ... et dicunt dæmonium habet,*† Finally, others—and these were the great and the mighty —offended at the holy freedom with which this new Elias censured their vices, furiously persecuted him. Captivity and death were the rewards which they reserved for the generous intrepidity of his zeal. *Dico vobis quia. . . . . Elias venit, et fecerunt illi quæcunque voluerunt.*‡

Such was the success of the Divine word when it was announced by the greatest amongst the children of men. Can we feel astonished, therefore, that the same word should be attended with a different result, when it issues from our lips? When we announce it from these pulpits, we enjoy the consolation of seeing a few righteous confirmed in virtue, and a few sinners brought back from their evil ways; but, with the exception of this small number of true believers and sincere penitents, what else do we behold? Ah! can we say it without tears? what do we see but those who profane, who despise,

* "For John came, and you did not believe him."—*Matt.* xxi. 32.

† "For John came, and they say he hath a devil."—*Matt.* xi. 18.

‡ "But I say to you, Elias is come, and they have done to him whatsoever they would."—*Mark* ix.

and who persecute the word of God? First, those who profane it—who listen to it as they would listen to human and profane discourses, and who, therefore, derive no benefit whatsoever from it: secondly, those who despise it—who, through proud disdain, refuse to hear it, and who thus deprive themselves of a most important means of salvation; and thirdly, those who persecute it—who hear it with perfidious intentions alone, who hate it, who calumniate it, and wish to be able to extinguish it in the mouths of its ministers.

Oh, my God! as I must support and vindicate the cause of Thy holy word this day, grant me, I entreat, that energy and wisdom which can come from Thee alone, so that I may announce the truth without the least restriction or reserve, and that I may also announce it with a religious moderation, which may reach the hearts of its enemies, and disarm their resentment, instead of provoking and exasperating them. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—The word of God, in common with all other sacred and Divine things, requires certain dispositions, on our part, to guard it from profanation. Now, what are these dispositions, my brethren? I will reduce them to three principal ones, which seem to me to comprise all the others: first, a disposition of faith; secondly, a disposition of humility; and thirdly, a disposition of zeal for the sanctification of our souls.

First, a disposition of faith. That is a sacred and mysterious tribune, my brethren, where man alone appears before your eyes—where the voice of man alone strikes your ears—but where, nevertheless, it is not man but God that speaks and teaches. *Non enim vos estis qui loquimini, sed spiritus patris vestri qui loquitur in vobis.** The preaching of the gospel is therefore, as it were, a kind of sacrament or mystery in which we must carefully distinguish what strikes the senses from that which is hidden and Divine. But what is capable of making this necessary distinction except faith?—that faith which St. Paul commended to the Thessalonians, when he said to them, *We give thanks to God without ceasing, because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the hearing of men, but as it is indeed, the word of God*†—that faith, which, according to the judgment of the great Apostle, is so excellent, that he did not hesitate to ascribe to it, not only all the virtues of those newly-converted Christians, but moreover, all the success of the gospel, and its

* "For it is not thou that speak, but the spirit of your father that speaketh in you."—*Matt.* x. 20.

† 1 *Thess.* ii. 13.

rapid propagation through the universe. *A vobis diffamatus est sermo Domini . . . . . et in omni loco fides vestra . . . . profecta est.**

How ardently we desire, my dear brethren, to be able to address a like commendation to you. But I appeal to yourselves, is it in our power to do so? Have you, like the first Disciples, this enlightened faith which pierces through those veils which are impenetrable to the eyes of the senses? Do you recognise Jesus Christ, who is now present in the midst of us, employing the tongue of the most unworthy of His ministers to communicate His Divine instructions to you? Is it this invisible Master you have come to hear? Have you approached this pulpit as another Mount Sinai, where the Lord, without displaying the awful pomp with which He was attended of old, vouchsafes, nevertheless, to descend into the midst of us, in order to proclaim His oracles? Are you aware of this mysterious power, of this ineffable dignity of our ministry, by virtue of which, dust and ashes as we are, we, nevertheless, occupy the place of the great God, and cause His very voice to be heard? *Deo exhortante per nos.*† Are you aware that the lips of the priest which produce the Saviour every day upon the altar, by virtue of the mysterious words which they pronounce, are also employed in producing the same Saviour in your souls, in a different manner, by the efficacy of another word?

Ah, Christians! too feeble and blind Christians!—you must confess that you do not reflect upon all this: that it is man alone you behold, and the discourses of man alone you have come to look for; and by a well-merited and awful chastisement you shall find precisely what you have sought. Whilst man shall speak, God will remain silent in your regard; empty sounds will ring through your ears, but your hearts will remain deaf to those eternal truths which are alone able to save your souls: you will be affected solely by that frivolous brilliancy with which the thoughts and language of orators sometimes glitter, but no ray of heavenly light shall penetrate your souls, to dispel their thick darkness; you will eagerly nourish your curiosity with some indefinable puerile arrangement of words and language to which you give the name of eloquence, but your soul, which stands in need of more solid nutriment, will depart void and hungry from this table where it ought to receive the life-giving bread of truth. Oh! let us

* "For from you was spread abroad the word of the Lord, and in every place your faith is gone forth."—1 *Thess.* i. 8.

† "God, as it were, exhorting by us."—2 *Cor.* v. 20.

be allowed, once and for all, to deplore with bitterness what constitutes your misfortune and our ignominy. It is the grovelling baseness of your earthly and human views that has enfeebled and degraded our ministry. You are not desirous of viewing us in any other light except as unprofitable and frivolous rhetoricians, whose sole business it is to satisfy the fastidiousness of your tastes and to banish the tiresomeness which besets your listless inactivity; and God, in His just indignation, permits that we should be nothing more. He withdraws from us and abandons us to our own resources; He deprives us of what would convert you, and He leaves us only what pleases and amuses you. Instead of these darts of fire which pierce and inflame the most obdurate hearts—instead of these lightnings from heaven which overturned Saul upon the road to Damascus—instead of these thunders which break the cedars, that is to say, proud spirits—instead of that voice of thunder which shakes the foundations of mountains, that is to say, sinners hardened in vice He leaves us the coldness of rhetoricians, the barren resources of profane skill, *the persuasive words of human wisdom*, which St. Paul disdained to use,* and which produce no fruit in the soul. Instead of zeal, we are endowed with talents; and because you are not believers, but rather fastidious and curious hearers, we, in our turn, are alas! no longer worthy interpreters of Jesus Christ—we are no longer Apostles, but eloquent men and sounding cymbals. Thus, the first defect by which you profane the Divine word is a want of faith. The second is a want of humility.

This pulpit, around which you are now assembled, my brethren, is an august tribunal, upon which the word of truth, seated as upon its throne, pronounces decrees which it proclaims at the same time, in the inmost recesses of the conscience of every one amongst you. In your capacity as sinners, you are impeached criminals cited before it, to hear yourselves accused of your errors and passions, that you may learn to know yourselves, to be confounded, and to condemn yourselves. Humble sentiments of respect, of fear, and repentance, are therefore the only sentiments which you should bring into the presence of that word by which you are to be judged. But how very different are the dispositions which you bring with you to this place! You come hither, to sit in judgment yourselves, to submit every thing to the supremacy of your criticism, to summon before your tribunal both your brethren, and the ministry of the word, and that divine word itself. Yes, your

* 1 *Cor.* ii. 1, 4.

brethren. You secretly apply to them every word which the zeal of a sincere charity inspires us to say, with the view of cautioning you about your own defects and disorders. The most striking likenesses we are able to draw of your habits, appear to you to be nothing more than the pictures of their vices; you invariably turn towards them the mirror which we hold up to ourselves, and every effort which we make to heal the incurable blindness of your self-love, to inspire you with a salutary confusion, and to awaken remorse within you, has no better success than to make you see more clearly the faults of others, to render the malignity of your censures still more acute, and to furnish you with new arms against your neighbour.

Yet this is not enough. The minister who speaks to you in the name of Heaven, is himself subjected to your rash judgments. So far from revering the august dignity with which he is invested, so far from listening to him with a religious trembling, as an ambassador from God, commissioned to instruct and to reprove you, do you not rather seem to regard him as an actor who exhibits himself to gain your applause, or to endure your disdain? To what a degree of humiliation is the Divine ministry reduced, in the eyes of the faithful, when we have become the objects of the trifling and shallow criticism which they daily employ, in reference to us! And how great is the extent of that criticism! I am ashamed to acknowledge it. Everything that appertains to us—even our language, our most trifling gestures, the very sound of our voice—are not all these made the subject sometimes of their puerile and senseless remarks, sometimes of their indecent sarcasms, and sometimes of their commendations, which are no less disreputable? Oh, my God! is this what ought to occupy the minds of Christians, when we speak to them of Thy justice, of Thy mercy, and of the terrible account which they shall one day have to render of their works?

Would that their censure extended no farther than our persons; that it respected, at least, the sacred word, of which God is the Author, and of which we are only the feeble organs! But no; they are not afraid to judge that very word which judges the world, and whose inflexible truth will pass judgment upon us for all eternity. Some of them would strive to impose silence upon its doctrines and mysteries, as being too highly elevated above human reason; others complain of its morality, as being too austere, and disproportioned to the infirmity of our nature; every one of them, forgetting that it has come down from heaven, would strive to form and fashion it, ac-

cording to the bent of his own caprice. My brethren, you applaud the Divine power of that word, when it is raised against crimes of which you are not guilty; against those enormous public disorders to which you may have fallen victims; against the injustice which you suffer, and the conspiracies which threaten you: in such cases you imagine that it does not display its terrors, or launch its thunders with sufficient force. But let it afterwards assail these particular abuses in which you delight—these dangerous pleasures, in which you persist in maintaining that nothing but what is innocent can be found—that scandalous nudity, which even pagans would have condemned, but which Christians justify—these criminal familiarities, whose depravity passion alone conceals; these suspected intrigues, which you hide by so many pretexts and devices—this hatred, these dissensions, these scandalous rumours, which sever the bond of charity, and disturb the repose of society itself—your luxury, your ambition—that dissipated, indolent, sensual life, with which you have never reproached yourself—this moral indifference to all religion, which leads you to violate its most sacred laws and most essential prohibitions on every occasion; let it be said to you, in reference to these things and a multitude of others, as John the Baptist said to Herod, *Non licet*—"That is not lawful"—Oh! how severe, how unmanageable, and even unjust, do you not then find it to be! In how great complaints, and murmurs, and railings against it do you not then indulge! Thus, it loses all its authority for you as soon as it undertakes your correction, because, instead of the humility which submits to its decisions and decrees, you bring to it the pride which passes judgment on everything, and finally presumes to judge and to condemn itself. Can there be a more manifest profanation? Finally, the last defect which leads you to profane the word of God, is a want of zeal for the sanctification of your souls.

Ah! my brethren, if you appreciated the value of that immortal soul which is within you, if you had a sincere desire of adorning it with virtue, and earning for it eternal happiness, how great consolation would you not afford our ministry! with what pious avidity would you not receive the lessons of the divine science of salvation! how carefully would you not engrave it upon your hearts, to make it the rule of all your thoughts and actions! This sacred seed of the word would no longer fall upon a dry and barren ground, where it is immediately trampled under foot, but upon a well-prepared and fertile soil, where it would produce fruit an hundred-fold; the face of Christianity would be renewed, and the preaching of the gospel

would be even at the present time, what it has been in its brightest days, the foundation of every virtue. But, alas! what influence is it capable of exercising upon a carnal and infidel generation, who have no longer ears to hear it? Man, buried in the mire of his senses, no longer feels the least concern for his true glory or his dearest interests; he has rejected his heavenly inheritance, to seek only earthly and perishable goods. Degraded by his own hands, he repudiates that noble portion of his being by which he is made like unto the Angels, and recognises only that which he possesses in common with the brute. In this state of abasement, he is unable to comprehend our language; and thus the doctrine of Jesus Christ has ceased to be intelligible to Christians. How can we feel astonished, therefore, that all our efforts to move them are unavailing? If we treated upon the interests of time, the objects of avarice, the affections of flesh and blood, it would be easy for us to arrest their attention, to excite their fears or desires by turns, to make them sometimes even shed tears; but as long as there will be question merely of the loss or the possession of God, of the life or death of their souls, of the alternative of everlasting happiness or misery, they will remain cold, distracted, and insensible, they will continue asleep upon the brink of the abyss, and will not awake until they have fallen into its depths.

But what! are there not Christians at the present day who wish to be saved? There are, my brethren, even still; but where are they who desire it efficaciously, who desire it upon the conditions which Jesus Christ has required? Where are they who persuade themselves that heaven is a kingdom of conquest, which must be won by offering violence to nature; that the path of salvation is narrow, rugged, and lonely, and that the broad way pursued by the multitude leads to perdition; that the world is reprobated with its examples, which are scandals, its pleasures, which are disorders, its maxims, which are only falsehood, and its glory, which is mere pride; that self denial, humility, mortification of the senses, the spirit of recollection and prayer, are fundamental and indispensable virtues of the Christian religion? Where are they who do not look upon all these truths, when we announce them from the pulpit, as a conventional language, which they may interpret according to their fancy; as figures and hyperboles, which serve to embellish our discourses; which they may retrench as much as they please, and derive no practical benefit from them? How many there are, then, oh, my God! among those who hear Thy holy word, who profane it! and in the crowds which fill Thy

temples, how few there are truly faithful who seek the sanctification of their souls!

This, O Lord! is the reason why our ministry, though all glorious and divine, has become a crushing burden, a sad and oppressive task for us. Sorrow withers our hearts, when we see that Thou art forgotten and disowned by men, and that they disown and forget themselves: that they live in a senseless disregard of their future destiny, and that our admonitions, our cries, and our tears, are unable to prevent them from hastening to inevitable ruin. Alas! Thy ministers are sometimes congratulated upon their success, and upon the good which they effect, when the world crowds eagerly to hear them, and especially when it seems to applaud them; but, O great God! what good do we effect if we do not change the heart; if every one, when leaving this place, carries with him the same prejudices, the same passions, and the same vices, as he had brought with him; if we cannot present to Thee, as the fruit of our labours, and of the sweat of our brows, one true penitent, who may become our crown, and may attest the victorious power of Thy word? Oh, how happy were these holy preachers of old, who carried Thy name to barbarous and infidel nations, and who, after incredible fatigue, gained them over to grace, either by the power of their discourses, or at least by shedding their blood! How happy would we be ourselves, if even at the loss of all that is ours we may be able to affect those sinners who hear us, to arouse them from a fatal slumber, which is so much akin to death, and to rescue others from darkness, which is, perhaps, even more profound than the darkness of infidelity itself!

But we have said enough about those who profane the word of God and hear it without advantage. Let us now proceed to consider those who despise it—who disdain to hear it.

II. When we raise our voices against those who absent themselves from our pulpits, and who despise the sacred word to such a degree that they seldom or never evince any inclination to hear it, it might be supposed that it is our own glory we have in view, and our own interests we strive to vindicate. No, my brethren, God forbid that we should! We have interests to defend which are infinitely more exalted and more precious. It is not our own cause we plead, but the salvation of our souls, the interests of religion, the cause of God himself. The words which we employ are His words, and not our own. It is to Him you listen when you lend an ear to our discourses; it is to Him you offer the insult when you despise them. *Qui*

*vos audit me audit; qui vos spernit me spernit.** And do you wish to know, my brethren, with what awful severity he punishes that sacrilegious contempt which is directed against himself? Learn it from his own lips. *Into whatever city or town you shall enter.* He says to His Apostles, *whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, going forth shake off the dust from your feet. Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.*†

Ah! you are sometimes astonished at these public calamities of which you may have been the witnesses or the victims. You ask how is it possible that these dreadful storms, these disastrous revolutions which shake the foundations of empires, which destroy, in a moment, institutions, morality, laws, and the whole order of society, which deluge the earth with blood, and inflict upon great and powerful nations those deep wounds which perhaps ages will not heal—how they could all have so suddenly arisen in the midst of prosperity and peace! You ascribe these catastrophes which alarm us to a thousand different causes. But how do I know, O my God! whether we ought not to recognise them rather as the fulfilment of Thy unerring threats—whether they may not be the blows with which Thou chastisest the kingdoms in which Thy sacred word, after having been listened to with respect for a long period, is at length repudiated, disowned, and almost universally abandoned! How do I know but that Thou mayest reserve a still more fatal punishment for our obduracy of heart? *It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city.*

But some one may say, "What! does God speak to us no where except from your pulpits! Is there no substitute for the instruction which you impart to us on His behalf! Have we not the sacred Scriptures, the works of the saints, and the many pious and excellent writings which the spirit of science and of zeal has dictated! And are not all these sufficient for us without the assistance of your discourses!" Oh! you who make use of such language, I may ask you, in my turn, whether you read these precious books for which you exhibit such great veneration, and which you would endeavour to substitute for the preaching of the gospel? whether you do not devote your leisure hours to reading of a very different kind, which is

* "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me."—*Luke* x. 16.

† *Matt.* x. 15.

better calculated to enfeeble and corrupt your heart, than to elevate it above the level of this earth, and to sanctify it? But without dwelling on that point, I feel it more judicious to answer, than the conversion of souls and the great effects of grace have been at all times attached to our ministry. It is our ministry which has gained over the world to Jesus Christ, which has overturned the idols and established the reign of true virtue upon earth: it is that will save you if you desire salvation. The written word is silent of necessity; in itself it is a mere dead letter: it requires that the application and the faith of those who read it should, as it were, animate it with the breath of life, and impart to it a voice which should make it be heard. If the hearers are distracted or languishing, it communicates nothing to their minds; it suffers their insensibility to remain undisturbed. But here, my brethren, the sacred word comes forth living and efficacious from the lips of the priest. *Vivus est enim sermo Dei et efficax.** It addresses the ears, the eyes, the whole man, and penetrates at once through all the senses, even to the very soul, which it fills with a salutary dread. *Penetrabilior omni gladio ancipiti.*† Nothing is exempt from its influence. It awakens remorse which has been sunk in lethargy; it excites a stifled conscience against the passions which held it in subjection; it severs the fatal union between the spirit and the flesh; it reaches disorders in their very source; it strikes at the root of the most inveterate habits, of the most cherished propensities, of the most tender attachments. *Pertingens usque ad divisionem animæ et spiritus, compagonum quoque et medullarum.*‡ Then are fought those violent and decisive conflicts in which nature is often conquered, and grace triumphs; the old man is destroyed; the new man springs up from his ashes; new thoughts and affections are called into existence along with him; the great miracle of a change of heart is wrought. *Et discretor cogitationum et intentionum cordis.*§ Who amongst you is a stranger to the manifestation of that omnipotent power which the Lord displays in this temple, which is His special dwelling-place—in this pulpit which is His throne—in these assemblies of a faithful people, where all tremble, bow down, and are hushed into silence in His presence? Who can fail to be affected by the majesty which it borrows here from the

* "For the word of God is living and effectual."—*Heb.* iv. 12.

† "And more piercing that a two-edged sword."—*Ibid.*

‡ "And reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow."—*Heb.* iv. 12.

§ "And is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."—*Heb.*

sanctity of the place, upon those altars upon which the blood of that adorable victim flows, and from all those sacred objects which surround us? How great is the efficacy which is imparted to it by the presence of the word of God, who resides in these tabernacles, of the sanctifying spirit who hovers unseen beneath these vaulted roofs, and some ineffable but sensible impression of the divine presence which cannot be found elsewhere?

Tell us after this, that you disdain to listen to the tidings of life and salvation, because they are announced to you by inferior preachers. Alas! my brethren, we freely admit that we are endowed neither with the profound wisdom, nor certainly with the virtues, of those who have preached before us with so much brilliancy and success; we are not endowed with the sacred and wonderful eloquence of these men who, without detracting in the slightest degree either from the august simplicity of the gospel, or the power which it derives from the humility of the cross, are, nevertheless, able to decorate and embellish it, and to display it in their discourses with no less brilliancy than strength and success. This splendour, and these attractions of the sacred word, were suited to happier times; and they probably were a just reward which heaven conferred upon the zeal and fervour of our fathers. But, have the Christians of our days the least right to expect such favours? Will they presume to complain of the want of elegance and refinement when they have deserved by their contempt and haughty fastidiousness, that they should be deprived even of the bread of children, and that the Lord should condemn them to the famine of His word—that most awful affliction with which He has ever threatened His people? Why do I speak of their contempt and fastidiousness? Oh! I could address infinitely more severe and overwhelming reproaches, not to you, my brethren, but to a great many others who manifest so much disregard for our ministry, and who obstinately avoid our temples! How long is it since the eloquence of the gospel has degenerated amongst us? It is scarce thirty years since we have seen the Christian pulpits occupied by preachers who were not unworthy of the brightest ages of the Church. Their voice was that of a Nathan or an Isaias; their zeal that of a Paul or a Barnabas; their language that of a Basil, a Chrysostom, or an Ambrose. We have heard them in our youth; and we have soon after looked round for them in vain. What has become of them? How could they have disappeared so suddenly? Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killest the prophets and destroyest those who have been sent

to thee, how canst thou ask why they are silent whilst thy hands are still crimsoned with their blood? After having hurled the pontiff, the priest, and the Levite, into one common grave, does it become you to reproach the holy tribe thus mutilated, with its lustre faded, and its strength enfeebled? What right have you to require that we—the sad relics of our departed brethren—the weak and only remaining ruins of the Church of France, which has been so illustrious and so flourishing in by-gone days—could, of ourselves alone, revive its undiminished glory, and support the whole burden of maintaining its ancient renown? Alas! reduced as we are to so small a number, wasted by fatigue, distracted by so many different duties, and so many laborious occupations, assailed by so many enemies, inundated by such torrents of bitterness, what leisure can we devote to that study and deep contemplation to which our more fortunate predecessors dedicated their lives in peace? Ah! instead of regarding our efforts with contempt, and thus conspiring to crush our spirit, would it not be more equitable to console us in our sorrow, and to animate our confidence by renewed earnestness and docility? If the Divine word has lost any of its outward ornaments and magnificence, when pronounced by our lips, ought it not, on the other hand, be more precious in your sight, inasmuch as it is more rare? Is it not your duty to preserve with the most jealous care those expiring embers of the sacred fire which still remain amongst you, and which threaten every moment to be extinguished?

Moreover, my brethren—for we are not afraid to do justice to ourselves—what have those celebrated preachers announced to your fathers; what has John the Baptist announced to the people of Judea, and Peter and Paul to those of Rome and Athens, but what we address to you now, as they have done? Do we not continually repeat that the world passeth away; that eternity is fast approaching; that every hour may be your last; that your impious pleasures will not make you more happy even here below, though they provide for you misery without limits after the present life; that virtue is the only one true glory of man, and vice his only real disgrace; that the salvation of his soul is his only important concern; that the judgments of God should be dreaded even by the most holy; that to bid defiance to them is the highest excess of madness and of guilt? What is there in any one of these truths, in whatever point of view they are regarded, that is not important, serious, impressive, worthy of the attention of solid minds, and calculated to affect every noble and generous heart? What must we

think of those who regard them only as objects of contempt and derision, who close their ears against these Divine instructions, to open them to the poisonous maxims of a base, carnal, senseless philosophy, which deludes, degrades, corrupts, and casts them headlong through every sort of error and disorder, into a bottomless abyss of woe, out of which they never can escape?

Oh! proud and contemptuous men, against whose unmerited contempt it is our lot to struggle, if any one of you is to be found in this Christian assembly, to him I appeal. You may despise our persons as much as you please; we shall suffer your contempt without a murmur; but, do not despise your own souls: do not despise a ministry which has been instituted to save them: do not despise that word which God himself places upon our lips, to instruct you and to lead you to Him. How feeble soever our voice may seem to you, disdain not to hear it. Such is the grace attached to that character with which we are invested, to that mission which we have received from above, that perhaps some auspicious moment may arrive at last, when a heavenly light will suddenly enlighten you at the foot of this pulpit, a salutary dart will pierce your soul: your prejudices will be dissipated, your tastes, your inclinations, will be changed: astonished at yourself, because now you love nothing but virtue, because you esteem nothing but faith, because you are a stranger to every other regret, except that of having sinned, and to every other desire, except the desire of being reconciled with Heaven; and filled with admiration and gratitude, you shall exclaim, "This is the work of the right hand of the Most High; it is He alone could effect such a prodigy: yes, it is He that speaks in this place, and I did not comprehend Him: but I now experience the power of His grace and this heart, which He has renewed, shall henceforth breathe no other desire except for Him alone." *Vere Dominus est in loco isto, et ego nesciebam.*[*]

In conclusion, my brethren, we shall briefly refer to those who persecute the word of God.

III.—Infidelity, my brethren, must be conscious of its extreme weakness, and must feel a singular distrust in its own cause. If such were not the case, how could it imagine that it were still necessary to persecute our ministry? What! after having exhausted all the arms of sophistry, of false wit, of misguided science, of slander and calumny, against religion, during the last eighty years; after having combined with these

[*] "Indeed, the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not."—*Gen.* xxviii. 16.

every contrivance of intrigue and corruption, during a long period of time; after having at length summoned proscriptions, murder, and conflagration to its assistance; after having demolished the temples, and broken down the altars; after having almost drowned the priestly tribe in its own blood; it trembles at the sight of a small band of priests, who have escaped almost naked from the shipwreck, destitute of all human support, and preaching the doctrines of the gospel, with simplicity, above the ruins of the sanctuary. What a cry of alarm has it not raised at the sight of the cross of Jesus Christ, appearing once more amongst us—at seeing it borne into our cities and hamlets by a few men, as poor and humble as the Apostles themselves, and erected, with religious veneration, in the public squares and rural districts, amidst the applause and homage of a delighted people? What efforts has it not employed to make the adorable sign of redemption be regarded as a standard of revolt, the teaching of Christianity in this most Christian kingdom as the most dangerous of all conspiracies, the gospel of charity and peace, as the war-cry of enmity and discord, and the teachers of a morality the purest and most attractive, as the enemies of social order and morality! Have we not detected it in the ignominious position of a spy, endeavouring to overhear our discourses with the malignant but vain expectation of being able to lay hold upon some ungu rded expression, which may excite the suspicion of public authority, and arm the severity of the law against us?

We do not complain of its persecutions, my brethren; on the contrary, we rather welcome these as a precious portion of the apostolic inheritance. We have not forgotten the instruction of our Divine Master—*Blessed are you when they shall revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you untruly, for my sake; be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven.**

And have we not reason to rejoice indeed? Is it not manifest to every one, that the calumnies which are directed against us serve to procure our own glory, and that of the sacred ministry whose duties we perform? If our doctrine were nothing more than a vain imposture, as some are so anxious to exhibit it, how could it excite so much rage? If our adversaries—they who so loudly boast of their liberality—held our discourses in as much contempt as they affect, why do they not rest satisfied with complaining, with regarding our error compassionately, and not have recourse to so many

* *Matt.* v. 11, 12.

detestable contrivances, in order to prevent our voice from being heard? Do they bestow upon religions which they know to be false, and upon their ministers, the distinction of hating them with so much virulence? Why do they exclusively exhibit their hatred against one religion, which is the most sacred of all, and the only one which, to use the expression of a celebrated philosopher, is supported by proofs? Ah! there must be something in this: it must be hated only because it is feared; something which enrages men so far as to make them desire its extinction, because they cannot banish a reverence for it from their hearts.

Would you desire to see this mystery explained, my brethren, and to learn the hidden but real cause of all this enmity and anger? I beg of you to consider that mighty accusation which they so constantly urge against us. I omit all the others, which carry their own refutation along with them, and are evidently false; but what is the capital charge which our enemies have constantly upon their lips, by the aid of which they strive to excite the whole world against us? I repeat it in their own words, which you have heard a thousand times—"You disturb consciences."

Oh, infidel! you admit, then, in defiance of all the sophistry, and all the systems of a sceptical and unbelieving philosophy, that man possesses a conscience: that there is an eternal, immutable law, superior to every human code, engraven upon our souls in characters that can never be effaced; that no one can violate this law without being immediately condemned by a secret tribunal, which each one bears within him—which issues its decrees, and employs remorse as the instrument of their execution in spite of every resistance. You feel the force of this invisible domestic power: and after ineffectual attempts to withdraw yourself from its influence, you say that we disturb your conscience, because our language is identical with that which your conscience speaks, and because the exterior word of God, of which we are the organs, when united with the interior word of the same God, which is heard within your heart, produces a voice of thunder, which strikes your heart with terror.

We disturb consciences! But we merely threaten the judgments of God—the punishments of eternity. These threats alarm and confound you. You are not, therefore, so regardless as you pretend to be of the terrors of religion, which is the ordinary subject of your ridicule and sarcasms; you are not so certain that the immortality of the soul and the eternity of hell, are mere illusions and inventions. All this strength of mind

which you assume in profane society, all these airs of audacious infidelity which you exhibit, are therefore a deceitful mask beneath which you conceal a feeble, agitated, and tremulous heart. Hence we are justified in assuring our hearers that it is better to take precautions against the danger of such an awful future, than to have the misfortune to face them and to fear them still, and thus to indulge in the insane and impious sport of leaving our eternal destiny at the mercy of the most awful of all hazards.

We disturb consciences! But whose consciences do we disturb? Is it the conscience of the good man? Our doctrine is, that man must honour and obey God, and love his neighbour as himself; that he must obey his rulers, respect the property and reputation of his neighbour; that he must be just, charitable, pure, sincere, and disinterested; and thus he shall be blessed upon earth, and enjoy unalloyed happiness in a better world. What is there in all this that can afflict or disturb the man who lives virtuously? Ah! honey is not more sweet to the mouth, nor the morning dew more refreshing to the parched grass, than these words and promises are to the faithful and innocent soul. It is only the conscience of the sinner we disturb. Oh! what more glorious praise can be bestowed upon our doctrine? What system of morality could be perfect and worthy of having God as its author, unless it consoled the just man in affliction, and alarmed the sinner in his iniquity and exultation?

We disturb consciences! Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who dost thus derive glory from the insane blasphemies of Thy enemies! Our word has the power of exciting the conscience: it is, therefore, most certainly Divine; for who else but God can have power over the conscience? Let all the kings, and sages, and legislators of the universe combine in attempting either to add a new law to the code of conscience, or to abrogate one of its enactments; let them decree that such a virtue will henceforth be a vice, or that such a vice will be a virtue: their effort will be productive only of universal ridicule; and why? Because it is too manifest that conscience is essentially independent of all human wisdom and power. Accordingly—and mark it well—there is only one religion upon earth which appeals to the consciences of all mankind, because there is only one, that has come down from heaven. Let a hierophant or a mufti ascend this pulpit and assume our position, he may say whatever he pleases, he may dart forth his thunders and lightnings, but you will listen to him without emotion or disquiet; it will not be in his power to reach your

conscience, or to affect it in the least degree. Let the infidel ascend after him; he may display all the powers of his eloquence—all the ingenuity of his reasoning; he may dazzle your intellects, he may seduce your hearts, he may inflame your passions, but he will have no power to terrify the consciences of those who reject his doctrines, or even to tranquillize the consciences of those who receive them. But observe how Christian truth, the very moment it appeared on earth has brought the consciences of all mankind under subjection to its laws—how the Jew and the Gentile, the learned and the ignorant, the Greek, the Roman, the Scythian, and the barbarian, have heard its voice from pole to pole. It is because the same God who has created the sun to enlighten our bodies has also instituted Christianity to enlighten our souls; one of these lights does not penetrate our eyes more naturally than the other penetrates our consciences. This is the secret of the propagation and triumph of the Gospel, when preached by the Apostles and their successors, at all times and in all places, whether a Paul, at the birth of Christianity, bears it to the most civilized nations of the earth, or a Francis Xavier, fifteen centuries later, announces it to a savage people, governed by no law. This is also, on the contrary, what excites so many persecutions against it, and will continue to excite them even to the consummation of time; for those who resist it are, by such resistance, guilty of rebellion against their own consciences, and this revolt drives them into dreadful and insupportable torments of remorse, which agitate them, as it is related of the furies, and leave them no hope of a release, except by employing every means in their power to drown, if necessary, even in blood, that word which they shall eternally reproach with having disturbed their rebellious consciences.

Oh! I appeal to you all, whoever you be—unfortunate enemies of the only true religion, and of a ministry instituted for your salvation—you who, perhaps, hate us though we love you with all the tenderness of the most ardent and sincere charity. Oh! that we were able, at the price of our own lives, to disturb your conscience at length so happily and so efficaciously, that, overcome by its cries, you may abandon that deplorable warfare which you wage against your God, against your own soul, against that eternal truth, which the Creator has engraved with his own hand upon your inmost soul, in characters which you shall never be able to efface! May our voice disturb your conscience as the voice of Nathan disturbed the conscience of David, when he pronounced that salutary *peccavi*,* and became

* 2 *Kings* xii. 13.

so illustrious a model of penitents—as the voice of Ambrose disturbed the conscience of the youthful Augustine, when he deplored his disorders, and abjured all his errors, and embraced with such reverence and love, that faith which he had assailed so long—as the voice of Peter disturbed the consciences of an entire people of Deicides who, when filled on a sudden with the most profound compunction, threw themselves at his feet, and with one voice exclaimed—"Teach us, O Apostle of Jesus Christ, what shall we do to expiate our guilt, and to obtain mercy."* To disturb you in this manner would be to restore you to peace and happiness: it would deserve all your affection and gratitude; it would obtain them.

But, O Lord! that our discourses may be equally efficacious as the discourses of these men who were so powerful in word and work, vouchsafe to make us sharers—feeble and unworthy ministers as we are—in the sanctity with which they were endued. Fill us with the spirit which animated them, that we may be faithful stewards after their example; that becoming dead to ourselves, and to every human motive and consideration, we may seek Thy glory alone in the exercise of a ministry which is altogether divine; that we may burn with an ardent zeal for the sanctification of our brethren, but above all for our own; that we may never instruct them without having previously examined our own state: that, by frequent and intimate communications with Thee we may be attentive to learn those lessons which we shall again impart to our people: and that we may never address them on Thy behalf but when we descend, like Moses, from the holy mountain where Thou Thyself shalt have dictated Thy will and Thy oracles; so that our words may derive all their efficacy from Him who is the author of them; that they may penetrate, like a dew from heaven, to the bottom of every heart, and produce fruits of life and salvation which may abide for ever. *Amen.*

* *Acts* ii. 37.

SERMON ON THE STATE OF HUMILIATION IN WHICH JESUS CHRIST HAS BEEN BORN.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

"A child is born to us, and a Son is given to us."—*Isaias* ix. 6.

What humble words, my brethren!—what simple and affecting language, to express the most stupendous mystery that has ever been proposed to the faith of man—the most extraordinary and the most Divine event which the annals of the world and of religion can exhibit! This Son who is given to us—be astonished, O ye heavens!—is the Son of God Himself, who, by an ineffable prodigy, has become the Son of man, and is conceived in time of a mortal mother, after having been begotten in the bosom of His Father before the existence of time began. This little infant who has been born to us is He whose immensity fills the whole creation, in whose presence the Angels tremble and fall prostrate—who has created the heavens and the earth by His word—who preserves them by His power, and by a single look could make them return back to nothing. This infinite being is confined within the narrow limits of a stable; the eternal Word is silent in a manger; the increated Wisdom is wrapped in swaddling clothes! O mystery! O abyss! O truly unfathomable depth of the Divine councils, in which human reason can only be agitated and confounded! *O altitudo divitiarum sapientiæ et scientiæ Dei.**

Accordingly, no less than four thousand years were necessary to prepare the world for the performance of so great and incomprehensible a miracle. Revealed obscurely in the beginning to our first parents after their fall, it became the source of all their hope and consolation; it was the object of the faith of the ancient just and of the ardent prayers of the patriarchs. Subsequently prefigured by the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law, by the entire worship of the synagogue, and by all the institutions of the chosen people, it was for a long time described under veils and shadows as the profound thought of God, the incomprehensible end of His adorable designs, the mighty and mysterious work of His wisdom and mercy. When it was at length more clearly revealed to the prophets, it excited their transports and became the subject of their sublimest canticles;

* "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God."—*Rom.* xi. 33.

they never ceased, during the lapse of many centuries, to preserve these in the minds of the holy nation, and as their voice resounded beyond the limits of Judea, they filled the whole earth with the hope of a liberator, who being, at the same time, God and man, was destined to bring salvation to mankind from the summit of heaven.

After such a magnificent display of promises, and predictions, and figures, when the time was come, HE, whom the universe expected, whom the desires of all invited, appeared at length. And what do we behold? As I have already said, a feeble infant, descended from the race of Adam, according to the flesh, born in a stable, cradled in a manger, scarcely protected by a few rags from the inclemency of the season, and unable to express himself except by sighs and tears. Could such marks lead us to recognise the promised remedy of our evils—the desired of the eternal hills—the Son of the Most High? Shall we accompany the shepherds and the wise men to adore Him? or shall we, with the incredulous Jews, imagine that our expectations were deceived? and shall we turn our hopes to a Saviour different from Him who had been born in Bethlehem?

Will you hesitate to answer, my brethren? Do you belong to that class of short-sighted beings who can discover nothing by the light of faith, and who, from their inability to form an opinion, except by the aid of the senses, can recognise nothing but abjection and meanness where the saints have beheld so much elevation and magnificence? Are you induced to join with those infidels who despise our doctrines, and to assert that infinite Majesty could not be able thus to humble and annihilate itself: that, if the God-head really vouchsafed to come down upon this earth, he would have appeared under a form more imposing and more capable of attracting the homage of our respect and veneration?

Oh, proud and senseless unbeliever! is this your wisdom and the amount of your knowledge of the things of God? Oh! how contracted are your views, and how really vulgar and grovelling are those conceptions which you imagine to be so elevated and sublime. Oh! that I could now convince you of that truth; and that by leading you to consider the ideas which faith gives us, and which are alone sublime and true, I may induce you to abjure those errors to which pride and a presumptuous ignorance give birth in the great concern of religion.

It is not the mystery of the Incarnation, my brethren, but the mystery of the Nativity of our Saviour that I shall vin-

dicate to-day. It is not, therefore, my duty to show upon the present occasion, how the economy of the redemption of the world, by the mediation of a God, made man, is altogether Divine; but having supposed that economy, and that Christ is the Son of God, we shall show that when He was to assume our nature, He should be born precisely as Jesus Christ has been born; that this birth, which is so humble, and so abject in the eyes of the senses, was, by that very humility and abjection, the most worthy of a God-man; and the reason may be said in three words. It is because no other birth could be better adapted: first, to His greatness; secondly, to His wisdom; and thirdly, to his goodness. The further explanation of these important points demands your most earnest attention. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—You must certainly feel astonished, my brethren, that I should presume to advance that nothing is more consistent with the greatness of a God, who assumes our nature, than to be born in a state of poverty, of humiliation, and meekness — to have only a stable for His palace, a manger for His cradle, and miserable and paltry rags as the robe of His royalty; yet, this is not a vain paradox, but one of the most solid truths which it is possible to inculcate in a Christian pulpit; and I expect that you will soon agree with me in admitting it. Yes, to believe that the birth of Jesus Christ is that of a God, it is unnecessary to have recourse to the splendid and miraculous circumstances by which it was accompanied — the supernatural light which suddenly pierced the darkness of night; the heavenly concerts which resounded through the air; the Angels who addressed the shepherds; the miraculous star which appeared to the wise men of the east, and conducted them to the feet of the child at Bethlehem; without dwelling upon these prodigies, I can perceive in the very appearances of poverty and infirmity, indications of a Divine greatness which are no less certain, and which more deeply affect the heart.

Let us for a moment imagine a gospel of human invention — let us suppose that the genius of man had undertaken to describe the birth of our incarnate Deity; with what colours do you think he would have painted the entry of the adorable Infant into the world, and the reception which He should have experienced from men? What pomp and splendour would He not display! What wealth and luxury would be lavished around His cradle! What a sumptuous palace would be prepared to receive Him! What gold and marble would have shone in every part of it! How abundantly would purple and

the most precious tissues be furnished for His dress! What a countless multitude of servants and courtiers would emulate each other in the performance of their humble duties in his service! In short, I leave it to your own imagination to represent to yourself every circumstance which an ingenious and creative mind would have added to this picture, in order to perfect and adorn it.

Now, my brethren, at the sight of such a wealthy and gorgeous display, will you exclaim—"Oh, how great and divine is this?" For my part, I would exclaim—"Oh, how paltry and puerile is all this when there is question of a God!" Why should He collect around Him all the frail appliances of our weakness—the frivolous ornaments with which we endeavour to clothe and decorate our misery, the deceitful goods which our avarice alone desires, the splendid trifles, the glittering toys with which our folly sports? Can He stand in need of them? or is He captivated with them? What! how could he stand in need of all these? How can that be reconciled with His Sovereign independence? He would then no longer be that God who is sufficient for Himself—that God, to whom David said: *Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods.** But it will be said: "It is not for Himself, but for us—it is to make a stronger impression upon our senses and to attract our hearts more securely towards Him that such splendour would be required." But where is His omnipotence in that supposition? Does He not possess supreme authority over the heart? and is He not able to inspire us with reverence and love, without dazzling us by a vain exterior? "But although He does not stand in need of such matters, perhaps He values their worth and is captivated by them." What, my brethren, can He who has made the heavens and all the furniture of them†—who has scattered the stars like dust through the firmament—who can see nothing, even in the immortal abode of His glory, which is worthy of His esteem and love, except the Father, in whose bosom He is begotten from all eternity—can He be captivated by our vanities? Can He value what even we ourselves do not esteem, and what we know in reality to be nothing more than a heap of filth, or an empty vapour? I can understand how a God would humble Himself, through condescension and compassion, to the level of our miseries, but I cannot conceive how He could degrade Himself to such a degree as to borrow our false greatness, and to equip Himself in the puerile decorations of our pride. A prince certainly would not

* *Ps.* xv. 2. † *Gen.* ii. 5.

degrade his dignity if he condescended to clothe himself in the dress of one of his slaves; but if he looked for some more splendid rags amidst the tatters of slavery, for the purpose of making it a paltry badge of distinction and dignity, would not any one blush for such miserable ambition? Accordingly, when a God condescends to humble Himself for the salvation of man, so as to make Himself like him, His dignity requires that He should not undergo that humiliation by halves; that He should not seek the consolation of an infinite abasement in a vain display of greatness. In proportion, then, as I perceive what reveals a human majesty in the birth of an infant Saviour, the less can I recognise a Divine Majesty, and I must proportionably attribute all to the invention of man; for it is after this system that inventions are devised.

But where is the man who, when left to the suggestions of his own mind, to imagine and describe the coming of the Son of the Eternal descending upon earth at length after four thousand years of expectation and impatient desires, could conceive the idea of having Him born in a stable—of exhibiting Him there laid upon straw, between mean animals, feeble, silent—exposed, almost naked to the violence of a rigorous season? Who is the man who, if he described an Angel appearing to announce such great tidings, instead of putting magnificent expressions in the mouth of this heavenly messenger, could think of making him say—"A Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, is born. This is the sign whereby you shall recognise His: *You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger.*"* No, my brethren, no; this sublime simplicity is no human language. No; all this scene, which is so humble, and, at the same time, so august—which appeals so powerfully to the soul, and flatters the senses so little, is not of human invention. I find nothing in it which our intellect could conceive—nothing which is proportioned to the conceptions and the intellect of man. In it I recognise those thoughts of God, which are not our thoughts; those profound mysteries of God, which the prophet styles a vast abyss; that true greatness of God, which manifests itself in this as well as in the universe, by remaining invisible there, and which manifests itself so much the more clearly as it conceals itself under meaner appearances; for, my brethren, where could we find a certain proof of Divine greatness, if we did not find it in great and admirable effects, produced by the most trifling causes and the most feeble means? Now, if this principle be true, look upon this child who weeps

* *Luke* ii. 12.

in a manger—what can be more mean, more feeble, and more powerless! But see what He effects in the world, both before and after His birth. From the very dawn of creation every thing speaks of Him—everything announces Him—everything sighs after His coming, and during four thousand years, the heavens and the earth are in labour to give Him birth; all the saints, from Abel downwards, are sanctified through Him alone; the prophets are inspired for no other purpose than to describe His person and to write His history by anticipation; the vocation of Abraham, the mission of Moses, the choice of the people of God, the laws and the religion which were given to this people, the priesthood of Aaron, and that of Melchisedeck, have their fulfilment and their end in the mystery of Bethlehem; empires rise and fall for no other purpose than to prepare this one event to which everything in the universe tends. Scarce has it been accomplished—scarce has the humble Son of Mary beheld the light, than the Magi hasten from the East to lay their treasures at His feet. His name alone has thrown Jerusalem into consternation; the assembled synagogue deliberates upon the interpretation of the oracles which concern Him; the impious Herod trembles upon his throne; all the power and all the perfidy of this cruel tyrant are insufficient to stifle in the cradle a feeble infant who has no protector upon earth. Suffer events to arrive at their consummation. As the sun diffuses a light, always increasing from the moment when it sends forth its rays, at the limits of the east, until it has reached the middle of its course, and fills the air with its illumination, and dazzles every eye with the lustre of its rays, so also the splendour of the divinity concealed in the obscurity of a stable, and under the resemblance of childhood, insensibly penetrates every veil which covers it, and shines from day to day with a brighter and purer lustre than before, whilst the Divine Infant grows in years and reaches the consummation of His glorious career. When only twelve years old, He astonishes the sages of Israel and the interpreters of the law with His wisdom, by merely addressing to them some questions in the temple; His replies afterwards confound the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Scribes and the doctors, the priests and the pontiffs; He speaks as no man ever spoke before Him; He makes multitudes eagerly pursue Him; He commands nature to obey Him; He reveals the hidden secrets of the heart; He cures every disease; He restores again to life some who were dead four days; He makes all Judea the theatre of His miracles; and fills it with the report of His name; He dies; the sun refuses its light, the earth shakes to its very foundations, the world seems ready to fall

back again into its original chaos; He comes forth victorious from the grave, and, as He had foretold it, the whole world assumes a new face; the idols are abandoned, the morals of the nations altered, the gospel and its Divine philosophy substituted for the reveries of false sages and the most monstrous errors; the God who was born in a stable, and died upon a gibbet, receives incense from the whole earth; and at the end of eighteen hundred years, He alone is adored by every civilized people, and extends His empire every day still further into every remote and barbarous country. All these miracles have begun at Bethlehem; they are the fruits of this manger, of these rags, of this abject and humiliating birth, whose mystery we celebrate this day. And must we not recognise the greatness of God in such trifling means attended by such effects? And shall we not acknowledge that here is the hand of Him who sows imperceptible grains to produce immense forests, who moulds a little clay to form the human race from it, and gives a fertility to chaos which makes it produce the universe?

Oh, beloved Apostle! I now comprehend the reason why, after having said that THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH,* you do not add that in such a state all His glory is obscured, all His greatness and His Majesty have disappeared in the excess of His humiliations; but you say, on the contrary, THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH; *and we have seen His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten Son of the Father*: for, by making Himself flesh, He made Himself a child; He made Himself, in appearance, the poorest and the most feeble of children; and by this He seemed to annihilate Himself; but from the depth of the infirmities of His childhood, from the abyss of His annihilation, shines forth a lustre which could emanate from Him alone, and which, in every respect, is worthy of the only Son of God. Mark this well, my brethren. If He had appeared under the form of a haughty giant, or of a powerful king, or of a philosopher or sage, we would have seen His glory; but in our eyes, it should necessarily be the glory of man. We would have ascribed His most wonderful success either to His gigantic strength or to the valour of His armies, or to the superiority of His learning or talents. If He had come, attended by numerous heavenly legions, who should have executed his commands, and accompanied Him at every step, we would have also seen His glory; but it would be a glory which He would have shared with the Angels, and would seem to be indebted

* *John* i. 14.

for some portion of it to their assistance. If He had come down in all the splendour of the Divinity—surrounded by thunders and lightnings, as upon Sinai, or encircled with His own light, and eclipsing the rays of the sun, as upon Thabor—we would have seen His own glory, it is true—the glory which is peculiar to Him alone; but seeing Him thus display, as it were, His undiminished majesty, we might, perhaps, suppose that He stood in need of all His splendour and strength to dazzle and subdue mankind. But when he comes to make a conquest of the world, and, as it were, loses all His arms, divests Himself of all His splendour, and, to a certain extent, of Himself, when He humbles Himself to the depths of infirmity—even to the annihilation of feeble and speechless childhood; when He descends to the ignominy of a stable, confines Himself in a manger, is surrounded with swaddling-clothes; when, after all this, He triumphs over all the powers of earth and hell, overthrows the empire of idolatry, and makes Himself be everywhere recognised as the true God of the universe, does He not manifest, in an inexpressible and Divine manner, the incommunicable glory of Him whose very meekness, according to St. Paul, is stronger than all creatures, and whose humiliations are above all dignities! *We have seen His glory.*

Having now proved that the birth of Jesus Christ, which is so humble and abject to the eyes of the senses, was, therefore, best adapted to the greatness of a Man-God, let us show from these same circumstances that it is also the most worthy of His wisdom.

II. St. Paul not only assures us that the weakness of God is stronger than men; but he also adds—that you must admire the bold language of this great Apostle—that the foolishness of God is more wise than all the wisdom of men * Now, it is in the mystery of the manger no less than in the mystery of the cross, that we are enabled to explain and justify this astonishing expression. An infant God—a God who weeps—a God, stretched under the very roof which shelters the meanest animals, and on the very straw upon which they trample—a God, clothed in paltry rags, enduring cold and hunger, and stretching forth His feeble hands towards a mortal mother who warms Him in her bosom and nourishes Him with her milk—is a spectacle which may well, indeed, be styled a sort of divine foolishness. But this apparent foolishness conceals beneath it a profound wisdom which infinitely surpasses all the wisdom of creatures; or rather all the wisdom of creatures

* 1 *Cor.* i. 25.

is nothing more than real foolishness in its presence; *for the foolishness of God is wiser than men.* This is the mystery which we must explain.

The Messiah was sent to reform the vices of men and to remove their errors; now all the errors and all the vices of men arise from three great sources—pride, voluptuousness, and the insatiable thirst of riches. What has been done by all these famous philosophers, who from age to age, have exhibited themselves as the masters of wisdom and the teachers of virtue, to close up those three poisoned springs—to heal those three mortal disorders of the human heart? Nothing—absolutely nothing. Their false maxims, and their seductive examples, had even aggravated the disorder to which their sounding declamations could apply no remedy. At length the true Teacher of nations—He who was to repair the calamities of the universe—appeared in the fulness of time. How shall He accomplish what so many men, celebrated for their science and their talents, had tried in vain? What industry will He employ? Perhaps, in order to undertake so great a work, He will at least wait until He reaches the ordinary maturity of age and reason; perhaps He will prepare Himself by long study and profound meditations, and seek some vast theatre on which He may proudly display the treasures of His learning and the victorious energy of His eloquence. Ah! my brethren, such would be the means and the wisdom of man. But consider the wisdom and the means of God; He begins to instruct at His very birth; His school is a stable, His chair is a manger, His lessons—ah! who would believe it?—are His tears, His sufferings, His humiliations, His nakedness, His silence itself. Oh, astonishing lessons! But how powerful and how efficacious they are!

In the first place, observe how they correct pride. Man was intoxicated by the notion of his own excellence. Having fallen by his own prevarication from the exalted rank in which the goodness of the Creator had placed him, he preserved nothing of his original dignity but an unjustifiable esteem of himself, and a criminal desire of elevation and greatness. He gloried in his reason, and in the power which it gave him over the beings by which he was surrounded, instead of blushing at the vices which had degraded him almost below the brute. Deprived of true glory, which he had lost, together with his innocence, he was, on that account, only the more desirous of that false glory which elevates and corrupts the heart. He could not endure either a master or a rival. He had even carried his audacity and his madness to such a degree

as to make himself equal to the Deity, and to place the corruptible image of man upon the altar, instead of the immortal God. How was it possible, then, to control such a blind and unbridled passion? How could he be taught to know himself, and be forced to despise himself, and to descend by voluntary humility from the summit of his pride to the lowest depths of his meanness and nothingness? Conceive, if you can, any means which is more efficacious to effect this end than the spectacle which is presented to us at Bethlehem. Look at this wonderful annihilation of the Saviour in His cradle, and listen to what His very silence proclaims to you. "Oh, man! you imagine yourself to be something great; see, nevertheless, how low I must humble myself to come near you. You pride yourself upon your reason, and your inclinations make you bear so close a resemblance to the brute, that as I wish to make myself like you, it is in the dwelling-place of mean animals I am born. It is to make you comprehend in what mire you have extinguished the Divine ray which shone within you, that I descend into the filth of this stable. You glory in your learning and wisdom, and because there is nothing in you but ignorance and folly, when eternal wisdom assumes your nature, it must appear in the form of silent and senseless childhood. You speak of your power and your fortune, but learn the extent of your weakness at length, when you see to what an excess of infirmity even Omnipotence has humbled itself in becoming united to you. Miserable slave of passion! you think you are free, and my limbs are bound with these swaddling clothes, solely to represent the ignominious fetters in which your soul is held captive. Oh, man! you are desirous of glory; learn from my ignominious position that it belongs to you no longer, and that you ought to abandon all pretensions to it—or rather learn to discard that empty phantom of glory which deceives you, and seek that true glory whose course I now point out. After having indulged the insane ambition of making yourself equal to God Himself, by pride, now conceive the more upright design of approaching Him by humility. By humbling Himself to excess, He has come down to the very level of your misery; by acknowledging your baseness and by embracing His humiliations, you may elevate yourself beside His majesty." It is thus the manger teaches proud man not only to humble himself, but even to esteem and to cherish humiliation itself—what no other instruction could impart.

Let us now consider the lessons which the same manger gives the voluptuous man. Pleasure is the mistress and the

idol of this world; the anxiety and agitation of all is directed to attain it. Man desires pleasure at any price; he strives to make every creature afford it; he seeks it by every means in his power; he immolates his conscience before it every day; he often sacrifices his repose, his honour, and even his very life to the pursuit of it; in his blindness he regards it as the sovereign good; but if he be illumined by the light of faith—if he pauses to contemplate the manger of the Divine Infant, must he not say to himself, "This is my Saviour, my Model, my Master, and my God. He was born in pain, and shall I exist for no other purpose but the indulgence of pleasure? He has been laid upon the straw of a stable, and I can repose on the couch of voluptuousness alone! Miserable rags have been His only covering, and I would only be clothed in delicate and sumptuous garments. His innocent flesh has been exposed, almost without protection, to the piercing blast of the severest winter, and my criminal flesh will not consent to endure the most trifling mortification. Ah! if the pleasures of life could be reconciled with virtue, as easily as I endeavour to persuade myself, why should a God made man wish to experience their privations and troubles alone! It is therefore true, that pleasure is a fatal poison, since He rejects it so far from him, even from His birth; and that the mortification of the senses is a salutary remedy for our souls, since, in order to give us the example, He begins to practise it as soon as He begins to live. Base world, thou, therefore, deceivest thyself, when thou sayest that time is given for enjoyment, and that the first years, at least, ought to be spent in joy and pleasure; for our Redeemer has not known this division, and the beginning as well as the end of His days on earth has been consecrated to austerity and tears." Such are the sentiments which are inspired by the mere sight of the cradle of Jesus Christ—sentiments which could never be inspired by all the subtle reasonings or all the eloquent declamations of human philosophy.

But is this spectacle, which is so efficacious against pride and the pursuits of pleasure, less destructive to avarice, the third source of the misfortunes and the crimes of mankind? Who could refrain from seeing a most clear condemnation and a species of reprobation of riches in all those signs of poverty and indigence which surround the infant Saviour? When that God, to whom all things belong, preferred the most complete destitution, and the most extreme misery, to all the splendours of opulence and fortune; when He came down upon earth to live in the midst of us, must it not be inferred from such a fact, that the goods which He rejects and despises are

not real goods, and that all our treasures of filth deserve nothing but contempt? What discourse could inculcate this as effectually as such an example? And when the self-same God will afterwards pronounce that admirable maxim—"Blessed are the poor;" when He shall add this terrible threat —"Woe unto you rich men;" what will He teach but what His birth has already inculcated in an equally emphatic manner; but what the stable, the manger, and the swaddling-clothes distinctly proclaim. "*Hoc prædicat stabulum, hoc clamat præsepe, hoc panni evangelizant.*"* If you ask, then, O worldly sage! what is the meaning of this sad and painful exhibition of humiliation, suffering, and poverty, around a child whom the world adores, we shall reply that it is the most sublime and momentous lesson that has ever been taught to mankind; that it is the refutation of all our errors, and the remedy of all our disorders. If you ask us afterwards what advantages has it produced, we would show you in Christianity, and chiefly in the primitive ages of Christianity, when its first footsteps were yet fresh at Bethlehem, and when the impressions of this mystery were yet retained there in all their force —a countless multitude, undeceived of all the illusions of the world, and released from all the propensities of nature, embracing a philosophy all heavenly, and leading upon earth a life worthy of Angels. We would show you the great ones of this world, not only exempt from pride and ambition in the midst of worldly grandeur, but, what is much more astonishing, humbled by their grandeur itself as being too little in conformity with the abjection of the Saviour—divesting themselves of their purple, and casting aside their crowns, to retire far from their palaces into the depths of wild caverns, to imitate the humiliation of a God who suffered annihilation for their sakes. We would show you the voluptuous renouncing all the pleasures of the senses, and centreing all their happiness in the crucifixion of that flesh which they had idolized so long. Solitaries and virgins astonishing the deserts by the austerity of their virtues; souls which seemed to have forgotten that they were united to mortal bodies. We would show you poor men happy in their distress, and esteeming it more than all the gold of the universe; rich men who employed their riches only for the consolation of the unhappy, or who, more generous still, rejected them as a burden, and purchased with joy, at the price of all their goods, that most precious treasure of the poverty of Jesus Christ.

* St. Bernard—Sermon V.—On the Nativity.

Despise, then, if you please, false sage! the imaginary folly of the manger, as the reprobate apostles of old despised that of the cross: for our own part we shall adore this sublime folly which suddenly taught man so many truths of which he had been ignorant, and disabused him of so many errors as old as the world, and corrected so many vices which he cherished; we shall recognise a mystery of Divine wisdom in this apparent folly, which accomplished in a moment what all the wisdom of man had been unable to effect throughout the course of ages, which enlightened their minds, reformed their hearts, overcame nature, peopled the earth with true sages, superior to every passion, and became the foundation of a morality so pure, so elevated, that it evidently could only come from heaven itself. *Loquimur Dei sapientiam in mysterio quæ abscondita est.**

In conclusion, my brethren, we shall briefly show that this birth of Jesus Christ, which was so humble and abject, and which, as you have seen, was best adapted to the greatness and the wisdom of a Man-God, is also that which was most worthy of His goodness.

III. Mercy and love were chiefly what brought down the Word of God upon earth from the highest heavens. It was, therefore, fit that He should make His entry upon this earth in the manner and condition which most strikingly manifested His goodness towards men. Now, I maintain that this is precisely what He has done by His humble birth in Bethlehem; for, in the first place, what could be more conformable to His goodness than to be born of a mortal mother, and to be in the state of childhood? If we were guided by human notions, it may, perhaps, appear to be more consistent with the dignity of THE WORD MADE FLESH, to receive a body formed by the hands of God, at once, like the first Adam, and to come into the world as he came—in the state of a perfect man; but if such had been His birth, He would not have contracted an intimate and indissoluble union with our nature; He would have resembled us, certainly, but he would have remained a stranger to our blood and our race, and we could not, with propriety, style ourselves His co-heirs and His brethren; whereas, by being born of a daughter of Adam, he wished to be—O prodigy of love!—the bone of our bones, and the flesh of our flesh. He wished to identify Himself with us—to belong, really, to the human family, and to enter into our

* "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery—a wisdom which is hidden."—1 *Cor.* ii. 7.

earthly filiation, that He may the more effectually impart to us the privileges of his Divine filiation. Could He carry His goodness farther? Hence, He has loved to style Himself, not simply man, but by a much more affecting expression, "the Son of man;" thus indicating to us that He recognised our fathers as His own, and that His origin, according to the flesh, was the same as ours. This is what delighted the prophet, and made him exclaim with so much joy and emotion, that a Son was given to us, because His human generation made this precious scion, as it were, the fruit of the same womb with ourselves.

The delight of the prophet was increased when he considered this adorable Redeemer, under the humble and amiable appearance of a child in the cradle, and he exclaimed—"A child is born to us." Oh, truly affecting spectacle! Who would not be moved, even to tears, at beholding that Divinity, which is so great and so awful in itself reduced by love to what is least and most infirm in human nature? Oh, Divine Son of Mary! how can I feel astonished that the heart of St. Bernard should have been dissolved with tenderness, when, to reward him for all his sacrifices, and all his labours, Thou wert pleased, during the solemnity of one of those nights upon which the Church celebrates Thy nativity, to present Thyself plainly to his enraptured vision, as the shepherds of Bethlehem beheld Thee, exhibiting the innocent charms and the innocent graces of infancy: and Thou didst crown all thy favours by placing Thyself—Oh, most beautiful among the children of men!—in his arms, as thou wert held of old in the arms of Thy mother;—when the holy solitary, enraptured with ineffable delight, being unable to contain himself any longer, and looking for new expressions to declare his overflowing joy and love, presumed to change the words of the Psalmist, and instead of adopting his expression—*the Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised*,* exclaimed, in his blissful enthusiasm, "the Lord is little and exceedingly to be praised." And shall we be so senseless as to desire that instead of such an affecting form He should have assumed a more imposing and majestic one? What! has He come to dazzle and alarm us, and not to attract us to Himself and to save us? Has He not come to bestow His benedictions upon every age of life as well as upon every nation of the earth? And was it consistent with His goodness to despise the most tender, the most feeble, and the most innocent age? In order to sanctify childhood, He should have united Himself

* *Psalm.*

to it, and been a sharer in all its infirmities. Oh! how many children owe their salvation and their happiness to this excess of condescension—from those who suffered martyrdom before they could understand it, by falling at Bethlehem beneath the stroke of Herod, to those who, purified by baptism, pass from their mother's womb to the grave, and from the grave to immortal glory every day of our lives.

But, in the second place, the goodness of the Man-God required that He should be born in poverty and suffering. Such a birth was due to His condition as universal solace to the afflicted. The prophets had foretold that He should heal all the wounds of our hearts, that He should wipe away every tear, and open His bosom to all the unfortunate.* Now, is every one well fitted to alleviate those sorrows to which He continues a stranger? Is it to the great and prosperous of this world that the poor and the unfortunate will have recourse, to endeavour to forget their calamities? That a man could effectually alleviate sorrow, must he not share it and experience it himself? This was the opinion of the Apostle St. Paul, for, speaking of the Saviour, he says: *We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities.* There is not one of them which He has not learned by His own experience, with the exception of sin, which he was incapable of committing; for He was *tempted in all things like as we are*, without sin.† This charitable high priest was therefore qualified to invite all the afflicted to Himself, and to say to them: *Come to Me all you that labour and are burthened, and I will refresh you.*‡ He begins to acquire this privilege by being born in misery. Come, then, to His manger, afflicted and desolate souls; come to it, O ye unhappy of every condition; it is you should surround His cradle. Come—you who are rejected and despised by this world—to that God who, when refused admission in every house in Bethlehem, could find no other asylum on earth except a stable. Come—you who have not, perhaps, a bed on which to rest your wearied limbs, not a garment to screen you from the inclemency of the season—come to this God, stretched upon straw, and so badly protected by a few rags against the piercing blast of winter. Come—you who suffer the most agonizing pangs of sickness or some cruel wounds—come to this God whose blood is about to flow beneath the knife of circumcision. Come—you who have long been persecuted and proscribed—come to this God, who was no sooner born, when He was compelled to fly to a strange and

* *Isaias* lxi. 2. † *Heb.* ix. 15. ‡ *Matt.* xi. 28.

distant land, to escape the slaughter of a cruel tyrant. Come, all you that weep, hasten to the feet of a God who weeps. If merriment and pleasure had surrounded His cradle, your presence would be embarrassing to Him, and for His part you would have no consolation to expect. But His sighs and groans invite you; His sufferings are our undoubted pledge of His tenderness; and you will find the alleviation of all your sorrows in the presence of that God who shares them along with you. But observe, my brethren, that when I appeal thus to the afflicted, I address myself to all mankind without exception, for we all in turn experience the piercing sorrow and the cruel anguish of this life; no condition is exempt from them; no industry can release itself from them. The whole human race nothing more than one great malefactor, who expiates his crimes by his misfortunes on this earth. Accordingly, He who had been born for the consolation and the remedy of so many calamities, should not be born in enjoyment and abundance, but in poverty and tears.

Finally—the last obligation which His goodness imposed upon Him was to be born, not in glory but humiliation; and why? For the encouragement of pusillanimous souls, and chiefly of sinners, moved by the desire of conversion. The majesty of God, my brethren, is imposing and awful. His sanctity amazes us, His justice alarms us, His greatness overwhelms us. If, then, the God-made-man had been willing, if I may use the expression, to maintain His privileges and His natural dignity, by appearances consistent with them, no mortal could dare to approach Him. Instead of taking refuge in His bosom, we would fly from His presence, and, like the Israelites, at the foot of Mount Sinai, we should fear to cast a look towards Him, lest a sudden death should be the punishment of our temerity. But He was the true Emmanuel; He wished to live in close familiarity with us, to dwell in temples built by our hands, there to receive our homage at every moment, to admit us to His table, and to become Himself the nourishment and the life of our souls. But, lest we should be terrified by such favours, it was necessary that He should encourage us by the excess of His humiliations, and if we be allowed to use the expression, that He should descend so low that we could not imagine He despised us. Oh, sinner! you who have been converted and penetrated with a just conviction of your unworthiness, it is you especially can understand what I say. When pursued by the sad recollection of your past disorders—of the deplorable abuse which you have made of your reason, your heart, and all your faculties—how often have you trembled at the bare thought

of approaching the sacred altar? In vain had you effaced your sins by your tears—in vain had you received forgiveness by the ministry of the priest—the recollection of your past defilements made you look upon your heart as a place full of filth and infection, into which you could not receive the virginal flesh of Jesus Christ without profanation. Oh! how necessary it was for you then to call in mind this stable, this society of mean animals, this rough straw, this ignominious manger, from which He who required to be united to you did not recoil. These were images so revolting to the eyes of the blind worldling, so consoling to the true penitent, that they animated your courage and changed the servile terror which froze your heart into a salutary fear, moderated by confidence and love.

O adorable Saviour! who art *the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour*,* let all mankind prostrate themselves to-day at the foot of Thy humble cradle; let them all behold with respect and emotion, this mystery, which is no less affecting than it is profound and sublime. Let the proud and the mighty humble their self-conceit before that Divine greatness which endures so many humiliations. Let the wise and prudent of this world abjure their vain science, and adore the holy and adorable foolishness of the infancy of God. Let afflicted hearts and penitential souls derive solid consolation from Thy sufferings by mingling their tears with Thine. Finally, let us all hasten to Bethlehem, following the footsteps of those happy shepherds who were the first to render their homage to Thee, that we may return, as they did, replenished with a holy joy, filled with love and gratitude, and that for the time to come we may consecrate our whole lives to Thy glory and service, that so we may be able, after our death, to praise Thee for all eternity in Thy kingdom. *Amen.*

* Titus iii. 4.

SERMON

ON THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST, DEMONSTRATED BY THE FULFILMENT OF THOSE PROPHECIES WHICH REFER TO THE IGNOMINY AND THE SUFFERINGS OF THE MESSIAH.

FOR PALM SUNDAY.

"The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified."—*John* xiii. 23.

ALTHOUGH Jesus Christ made use of these words at the moment when he was surrounded by the acclamations and homage of an entire people, and received in triumph into Jerusalem, a few days before His death, the hour of glory, of which He speaks, is not the hour of that short and boisterous triumph which we commemorate this day, and which was destined to be soon succeeded by very different scenes. What, then, is that hour of the glory of the Son of man which He so ardently desires, and which seems to absorb all His thoughts, even in the midst of the public honours which are paid Him, and the concert of praises which is heard around Him? Shall I declare it, Christians? The hour of glory to which he aspires, is that on which He shall consummate His painful sacrifice—when overwhelmed with insults, delivered up to merciless executioners, covered with wounds, and bathed in His own blood, He shall expire upon an infamous gibbet, amidst the imprecations and insults of a countless multitude, which shall assemble to enjoy His ignominy and His torments. *Dicebat, significans qua morte esset moriturus.**

This is a strange glory! you may exclaim; but I maintain that it is the glory which is most substantial and most worthy of a Man-God. Deprive the Son of Mary of His glorious punishment and His cross, and what will become of His most interesting claims upon our veneration and love? He will no longer be the Redeemer foretold by the prophets who was to make satisfaction for us to the divine justice, and to wash away our sins in His blood. He will not be the powerful conqueror who went down into the very empire of death to make it surrender the victory to Him, and to come forth alive from the tomb for the purpose of opening to us the way to immortal life. His works and his favours would have been of no avail. He would have wrought splendid miracles, but they would be useless to mankind; He would have taught men a sublime

* "This He said, signifying by what death he should die."—*John* xii. 33.

doctrine, but He would not have saved them; He would have caused hell to tremble, but He would not have deprived it of its prey. A blind world may be ashamed of the humiliations and sufferings of the Saviour, or make them the subject of its foolish sarcasms; for our part, let us admit that He never proves His Divinity more clearly than when He annihilates Himself by an incomprehensible excess of love; let us adore the prodigies of omnipotent power in a mystery of apparent weakness, and an infinite grandeur in unbounded humiliation.

The passion and death of Christ, therefore, so far from weakening our faith in His Divinity, furnish, on the contrary, one of its most solid and striking evidences; for Jesus Christ has suffered precisely what the Man-God ought to suffer, as is proved by the oracles of the prophets exactly fulfilled in His passion; and all I propose to treat in this discourse is, that the exact fulfilment, in the passion of Jesus Christ, of those sacred oracles which foretold the ignominy and sufferings of the Messiah, is a most convincing proof of His Divinity. *O crux, ave, &c.*

Every one is aware that, according to the divine oracles, the Messiah, who has been promised to the earth, and expected during four thousand years, should be, by the most ineffable alliance, God and man at the same time. Nothing is more clearly expressed—nothing more frequently repeated in the writings of the prophets. Hence, the Name EMMANUEL,* which they give Him, and which signifies *God with us*†—God united to man. Hence, the affecting representations under which they describe Him, at the same time both as a fertilizing dew which should drop from the clouds of heaven, and a blessed bud which the land should produce.‡ If they speak of His Divinity, His generation is ineffable. *Generationem ejus quis enarrabit.*§ He is the only Son of the most High, begotten from His womb before the day-star. *Filius meus es tu*;‖ *ex utero ante luciferum genui te.*¶ He is the Word—the Almighty Word of God, who left His eternal throne and descended from the highest heavens upon the earth. *Omnipotens sermo tuus de cœlo a regalibus sedibus prosilivit.*** It is Himself has spoken by the prophets, and He comes to accom

* *Isaias* vii. 14. † *Matt.* i. 23.

‡ "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened and bud forth a Saviour."—*Isa.* xlv. 8.

§ "Who shall declare his generation?"—*Ibid.* liii. 8.

‖ *Ps.* ii. 7. ¶ *Ps.* cix. 3.

** "Thy almighty Word leaped down from heaven from Thy royal throne."—*Wisd.* xviii. 15.

plish His own predictions. *Ego ipse qui loquebar ecce adsum.** Finally, He is *the wonderful, God the mighty,*† the sovereign Lord of the universe, whom all creatures adore.‡ Behold Him expressly described as God. Consider Him now as man. He shall be conceived and brought forth by a daughter of Adam. *Virgo concipiet et pariet filium.*§ He will be born, like ourselves, in the infirmity of Childhood. *Parvulus natus est nobis.*‖ Descended from the race of Abraham, of Jesse, and of David, He will be styled in the truest acceptation THE SON OF MAN. He will not be exempt from any of the pains or miseries of humanity. He will know by experience what it costs to be a man, and He will know what it is to suffer. *Virum dolorum et scientem infirmitatem.*¶ It is therefore a doctrine beyond dispute, that the Liberator foretold by the ancient prophets, should be really God and really man at the same time.

It appears no less certain from these same predictions, that this God-man was destined to suffer torments and death. *Occidetur Christus.*** This was properly the object of His coming, and of the incomprehensible union between the Divine and human nature in His person. The Man-God appeared on earth to be sacrificed, and by the shedding of His most precious blood to satisfy at length an Infinite Justice which no other offering could appease. He had been pointed to David a thousand years before this mystery was fulfilled. That holy king had beheld in spirit the Word of God invested with mortal flesh, offering Himself to His Father as the victim pointed out from the beginning of the world; *In capite libri scriptum est de me,*†† substituting Himself for the oblations and holocausts of the law, as a victim more worthy of His Father's acceptance. *Holocaustum et pro peccato non postulasti; tunc dixi, Ecce venio.*‡‡ And thus devoting Himself without reserve that He may fulfil the mysterious designs of His eternal wisdom. *Ut facerem voluntatem tuam Deus.*§§ Such, then, was the profound design conceived before all ages—conceived beneath the mysterious words of the most ancient of all promises, and further explained in the whole course of the Scriptures—that a God was destined to receive

* "I myself that spoke; behold I am here."—*Isaias* lii. 8.
† *Ibid.* ix. 6. ‡ *Ps.* xliv. 12. § *Isaias* vii. 14.
‖ *Ibid.* ix. 6. ¶ *Dan.* vii. 13. ** *Isaias* liii. 3.
†† "In the head of the book it is written of Me."—*Ps.* xxxix. 8.
‡‡ "Burnt-offering and sin-offering Thou didst not require, then said I, Behold, I come."—*Ibid.* vii. 8.
§§ "That I should do Thy will, O my God."—*Ibid.* vii. 9.

a body like ours in order that He may be able to offer Himself in sacrifice, and to suffer death. *In capite libri scriptum est.*

But what will be the circumstances of this tremendous sacrifice? How will the immolation of so august and extraordinary a victim be solemnized? Will He be conducted to the temple in an imposing procession, stabbed with the sacred knife by the hand of the high-priest amid the most solemn ceremonies of religion, and consumed upon the altar of holocausts by a fire come down from heaven? All the prophets unanimously answer in the negative. They declare that the death of the Incarnate Word will be the most cruel and the most ignominious that has ever been heard of. *Morte turpissima condemnemus eum.** *Contumelia et tormento interrogemus eum.*† That there will be no display attending, except that of a hideous punishment; no ministers but executioners; no altar, except an infamous gibbet; no religious solemnity, except the tumult of every uncontrolled passion, the cries of rage and blasphemy; all the most unheard-of excesses of hatred, rage, the most barbarous inhumanity, and the most sacrilegious impiety. Explain clearly, O divine prophets! how the Son of man shall be treated. He shall be treated as *the most abject of men,*‡ *as the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.*§ He shall be trampled under foot like a worm of the earth—*a worm and no man.* He shall be condemned and put to death like the vilest wretches. *Cum sceleratis reputatus.*‖ He will be torn with scourges, crushed with blows, covered with filthy spittle, and *filled with reproaches.*¶ Enraged enemies, or rather furious monsters, thirsting for his blood, will assail him on every side; they will pierce His hands and feet. *Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos.*** They will open His side with a lance. *Aspicient ad me quem confixerunt.*†† They will stretch his limbs so violently upon the fatal wood that it will be possible to reckon all His bones. *Dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea.*‡‡ They will give Him gall in His exhaustion, and vinegar to quench His thirst. *Dederunt in escam meam fel, et in siti mea potaverunt me aceto.*§§ And to aggravate their barbarity, they shall ridicule His torments, and continue to

* "Let us condemn Him to a most shameful death."—*Wisd.* ii. 20.
† "Let us examine Him by outrages and tortures."—*Ibid.* xix.
‡ *Isa.* liii. 3. § *Ps.* xxi. 17.
‖ "Reputed with the wicked."—*Isa.* liii. 12.
¶ *Lament.* iii. 30. ** *Ps.* xxi. 17. †† *Zach.* xii. 10.
‡‡ *Ps.* xxi. 18. §§ *Ibid.* lxviii. 22.

assail Him with their outrages, even to His last expiring sigh. *Omnes videntes me deriserunt me . . . . . et moverunt caput.**

These are not the words of the Evangelists, my brethren, but those of David, Isaias, Jeremias, Daniel, Zacharias, I may say, of all the prophets. These are the words in which they described the ignominy and the sufferings of the Man-God, many centuries before these sufferings occurred. If, then, Jesus Christ had not suffered all these—if any one of these indignities had been wanting to His passion—He could not be that Man-God of whom they prophesied, for their predictions would not have been fulfilled in Him. The dreadful scenes of the high priest's court and of Calvary, in which these predictions have been so literally, so rigorously fulfilled, are necessary, in order that we should believe, with a full assurance in His Divinity. It is there we read the most authentic proofs of that Divinity, graven in bloody characters upon every part of His body; there we reckon His claims upon our adoration by the blows He received, by the wounds which covered Him, by the insults and torments which He endured.

There is no medium, my brethren; we must either recognise Him by these marks as the Divine Messiah whom the universe so long expected, or else destroy all the prophecies, and reject them as fables, because they foretell no other Messiah except Him whom they describe by these marks as the Man of sorrows and the victim of the sins of the world. But who dare reject them as false when the very exactness with which they have been fulfilled, even in the most minute particulars, establishes their correctness beyond all controversy? Who could be so senseless as to believe that without the inspiration of heaven, and by a mere effect of chance, men would have been able to foresee, eight, ten, twenty, forty centuries before they occurred, a series of wonderful events which were contrary to all the laws of nature, as well as to all probability, but which have, nevertheless, been fulfilled in every particular, before the eyes of the whole earth, long after the authors of the prediction have gone down to their graves? Who could be persuaded that enthusiasts or impostors would be able to discover in the abyss of the distant future, and predict, with certainty, the birth of an extraordinary personage who has never had a model, who bears no resemblance, in the least particular, to anything which men know or invent,

* *Ibid.* xxi. 8.

but who, nevertheless, appears at a given period—precisely as they have described Him—at the exact period which they have marked out—in the very place which they have described by name—performing the miracles which they had promised—accomplishing the great works for which they said He would be sent—changing the face of the universe as they had foretold—in a word, picturing in His labours, in His tortures, in His death, in the imperishable monuments of His power which He has left behind Him, the entire scene which they described in their writings, so many centuries before, with such a vigorous hand and unerring pencil.

Let us confine ourselves to His passion and death which form the subject of this discourse. Have you not been struck with the vivid picture which they draw in those words which I have lately repeated for you concerning His bloody scourging, *Congregata sunt super me flagella*,* and His dolorous crucifixion, *Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*,† and the disgraceful insults which He endured from the murderers and executioners, *Faciem meam averti ab increpantibus et conspuentibus in me*,‡ and the cruel derision of the multitude assembled to enjoy the spectacle of His torture, and to insult His profound desolation. *Omnes videntes me deriserunt me*.§ If imagination had directed their pen, is it in ignominy and torments, or rather is it not in splendour and power that they would have exhibited Him whom they wish to make us adore as the Saint of saints, the King of Glory, and only Son of the Most High? And if they had conceived the fanciful and improbable idea of making Him suffer the death of criminals, would they have added for Him alone the inconceivable and revolting accessories of spittle and blows to every other torment that could be conceived, and the atrocious and unparalleled scoffs of an entire populace, loaded with His favours, instead of that natural compassion which is felt for the unfortunate in their last moments? In a word, if they had not beheld, in the prophetic light, the very objects which they described, how could they have entered into such accurate details, or have drawn such a striking resemblance in every particular? Where could they have found the following particular facts?—That the Saviour would be delivered up by one of His disciples—by a friend who had lived in most intimate familiarity with Him—who had received the most tender marks of His confidence and

* *Ps.* xxxiv. 15. † *Ps.* xxi. 17.

‡ "I have not turned away My face from them that rebuked Me and spit upon Me."—*Isaias* l. 6.

§ "All they that saw Me have laughed Me to scorn."—*Ps.* xxi. 8.

love; *Homo unanimis . . . . . notus meus** . . . . . *in quo speravi*,† that this traitor would even go forth from the very table where he had eaten with his Master; *Qui edebat panes meus*,‡ and go to treat with His enemies, and to plot His ruin; *Egrediebatur foras et loquebatur in idipsum*,§ that the Son of God would be sold for the paltry price of thirty pence; *Triginta argenteos decorum pretium quo appretiatus sum ab eis*;‖ and, finally, that this price of crime would be brought and thrown into the temple to serve for the purchase of a potter's field. *Et tuli triginta argenteos et projeci illos in domum Domini ad statuarium*.¶ Such were the words of the prophet Zacharias, more than five hundred years before the treason of Judas. Now read the history of his treason in the Gospel. I ask you are they details which could be conjectured? The evangelist, St. Matthew, relates that before they nailed the Saviour to the Cross, *they gave Him wine to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted, He would not drink*:** and the Psalmist had declared more than a thousand years before that they gave Him gall, without adding that He drank it; whilst the same Psalmist declares, in the same passage, that in His thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink;†† and the evangelist St. John relates that a little before He expired, *He said, I thirst. Now, there was a vessel set there full of vinegar; and they putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth; Jesus, therefore, when He had taken the vinegar said—It is consummated*.‡‡ Can anything more literal and more precise be conceived? I could adduce twenty other circumstances equally minute, and foretold with equal clearness, for they have been most exact in every particular—even in the caprice of the soldiers who, after having crucified Jesus Christ, *divided His garments amongst them*, but being unwilling to break His seamless garment, cast lots for it. *Diviserunt sibi vestimenta mea et super vestem meam miserunt sortem*.§§

* "A man of one mind, my familiar."—*Ps.* liv. 14.

† "In whom I trusted."—*Ps.* xl. 10.

‡ "Who ate My bread."—*Ps.* xl. 10.

§ "He went out and spoke to the same purpose."—*Ps.* vii. 8.

‖ "And they weighed for my wages thirty pieces of silver."—*Zach.* xi. 12.

¶ "And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and I cast them into the house of the Lord, to the statuary."—*Zach.* xi. 13.

** *Matt.* xxvii. 34.

†† "And they gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst, they gave Me vinegar to drink."—*Ps.* lxviii. 22.

‡‡ *John* xix. 30.

§§ "They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots."—*Ps.* xxi. 10.

Without dwelling at greater length upon this detail of facts, which may fatigue your attention, I pass on to more general views; and I beg to direct your whole attention to four great characteristics in the sacrifice of the Man-God which are distinctly pointed out in the Old Testament, and found, in a striking manner, in the passion of Jesus Christ. The consideration of these great features is calculated to make the most profound, and at the same time, the most useful impression upon your minds.

The first distinctive character of the death of the Messiah, which I perceive in the prophecies, is, that it will be altogether voluntary. Isaias says, *He was offered because it was His own will.** He will save the world if He lays down His life for it—*If He shall lay down His life for sin.*† But no force will be able to deprive Him of it against His own will, and death shall have no power over Him, except by His own order. *Because it was His own will.* Now, tell me, my brethren, if, with the exception of Jesus Christ alone, any man has ever existed who could, without foolishness, pretend to be exempt from the common necessity of dying? Who else, besides Himself, has ever ventured to say what He so often repeated? *No man can take away My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.*‡ This is not a vain language, for the effects justify it. Although His enemies are disturbed, and although they murmur around Him whilst He teaches quietly in the midst of Jerusalem, notwithstanding all their power and their numbers, they dare not make any assault upon His person, *because His hour was not yet come.*§ But that time at length arrived, as He Himself declared, in these words—*After two days shall be the pasch, and the Son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified.*‖ and immediately, as if upon a signal given, *then were gathered together the chief priests and ancients of the people . . . . that they might apprehend Jesus, and put Him to death.*¶ Then, and not till then, the soldiers approached to seize upon Him; and with a word he lays them prostrate upon the earth; afterwards, when He allowed them to rise up, He says—*This is your hour,*** and after having given them a fresh proof of His omnipotence by the miraculous cure of one among them, He delivers Himself up into their hands. *He was offered because it was His own will.* But let us behold Him upon the

* *Isaias* liii. 7.
† *Isaias* liii. 10.
‡ *John* x. 18.
§ *John* viii. 20.
‖ *Matt.* xxvi. 2.
¶ *Matt.* xxvi. 3, 4.
** *Luke* xxii. 53.

cross, and consider with what freedom He dies. All the cruelty of His enemies, all the fury of His executioners, is already exhausted upon Him; His life is almost extinct, but no torments, no violence, can deprive Him of it against His will. He must, as you have heard, lay it down of His own accord. *Ego pono eam a me ipso.* Then, *knowing that all things were accomplished*,* and that for the entire fulfilment of the ancient oracles, nothing remained for Him but to die, Jesus raised up His eyes to Heaven, and said—*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.*† At the same time, to mark the departure of His soul, He sends forth—not a feeble sigh, like the dying, but a *loud voice*‡—*clamans voce magna* -a voice so powerful and so terrible that it shakes the earth to its foundations—that the rocks are rent, and the tombs burst asunder—a voice so extraordinary and so Divine that at the signal the centurion who guarded Him recognised even Him whom he saw expiring on a gibbet as the true Son of God. *Videns quia sic clamans expirasset ait vere filius Dei erat.*§ Thus, by His last sigh, and without awaiting His resurrection, He proved Himself master of life and death. Such was the first distinctive character of the sacrifice of the Man-God, *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit.*

Its second characteristic is not less worthy of your attention. The Messiah should not only be the THE JUST by excellence,‖ but, astonishing fact! it was in His very quality of just and holy, that He should endure all the horrors of the punishments reserved for criminals. His enemies should say, "Let us lie in wait for Him—let us condemn Him to a most shameful death." Whom? "The just." *Circumveniamus justum*¶ . . . . . *morte turpissima condemnemus eum.*** Such has been the prediction. Now open the Gospel, and see whether it is not in quality of just that Jesus suffers so much indignity and rigour—whether His title of just is not authentically proclaimed at every stage of His bloody passion—whether it does not resound through ever place which is the scene of His humiliation and sorrow—whether it is not even heard from the lips of those who betray Him, who condemn Him, and who crucify Him. Here is Judas casting into the temple the price of his treachery, and exclaiming—"I have sinned in betraying the blood of this Just Man." *Peccavi tradens sanguinem justum.*†† There is the wife of Pilate beseeching her

* *John* x. 18. † *Luke* xxii. 46. ‡ *Matt.* xxvii. 50.
§ "Seeing that crying out in this manner He had given up the ghost, said: Indeed this Man was the Son of God."—*Mark* xv. 39.
‖ *Isaias* liii. 11. ¶ *Wisd.* ii. 12. ** *Wisd.* ii. 20.
†† *Matt.* xxvii. 4.

husband *to have nothing to do with that Just Man. Nihil tibi et justo illi.** Then, there is Pilate himself, who, having inhumanly scourged Jesus Christ, at the very moment when he pronounces the decree, and sends Him to execution, washes his hands in presence of the whole people, and protests that he is *innocent of the blood of this Just Man.*† Finally, there is the Roman officer that presides over the execution, and who, after having commanded the executioners, and having seen the victim expire, exclaimed—*Indeed this was a Just Man. Vere hic homo justus erat.*‡ What extraordinary admissions! Do you hear them, my brethren? Judas! whom have you betrayed? "The just." Pilate! whom have you condemned? "The just." Soldiers! whom have you nailed to the cross? "The just." Is not this evidently that death and that condemnation of the Just by excellence which is so clearly pointed out in the prophecy? *Morte condemnemus justum.*

Why, then, was it necessary that the innocent and Holy One should perish? The answer is easy; and this is the third characteristic of His passion—the most common and the best known of any. Who is ignorant, my brethren, that the world expected that all the Scriptures had predicted a just one and a Saviour, who having nothing to expiate for Himself, should sacrifice Himself for the guilty, and thus reconcile heaven with earth. But to what other, besides Jesus Christ, could this character of Saviour and expiatory victim of the human race be attributed? Who else has ever received, or even dared to assume, that title, or even fulfil the idea which the prophets had given us of Him? It was written that the Saviour should bear the iniquities of all mankind. *Iniquitates eorum ipse portabit.*§ And Jesus styles Himself the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world.‖ It was written, that the Saviour should be *wounded for our iniquities*, and *bruised for our sins*;¶ and Jesus has said, *This is my body which shall be delivered*—or broken—*for you*;** *this is my blood which shall be shed for the remission of sins.*†† It was written, that the Saviour should pray for sinners as He expired;‡‡ and Jesus, when lifted up on the cross, implored forgiveness for all the guilty—saying, *Father, forgive them.*§§ It was written, that this just servant sacrificed should be the justification of many;

* *Matt.* xxvii. 19. † *Matt.* xxvii. 24. ‡ *Luke* xxiii. 47.
§ *Isaias* liii. 11. ‖ *John* i. 29. ¶ *Isaias* liii. 3.
** 1 *Cor.* xi. 24.—The Greek text contains the word "broken," instead of "delivered," which is found in the Vulgate.
†† *Matt.* xxvi. 28. ‡‡ *Isaias* liii. 12. §§ *Luke* xxiii. 34.

justificabit ipse justus multos,* and Jesus—who is sanctity itself—was immolated for the sanctification of all, *that they also may be sanctified in truth. Pro eis ego sanctifico meipsum ut sint et ipse sanctificati.*† What an admirable conformity! How everything corresponds—feature for feature, word for word!

But this conformity is no where more striking than in the last characteristic, of which I have to speak. What notion could lead those wicked men to the tremendous excess of putting to death the Saint of saints? They had a two-fold motive, which is most remarkable—which was clearly specified by the Holy Spirit in the Book of Wisdom. First, they wished to punish Him, *because He called Himself the Son of God; Quoniam filium Dei se nominat.*‡ And secondly, to prove that He was not the Son of God, because, according to their mode of reasoning, if *He be the true Son of God, He will defend Him and deliver Him from the hands of His enemies. Si enim est verus filius Dei suscipiet et liberabit eum.*§ Such will be the thought of these wicked men; for the inspired writer adds: *these things they thought. Hoc cogitaverunt.*‖ Here are, in two words, the whole feeling, and as it were, the whole soul, of the murderers of Jesus Christ.

First, they condemned Him for having styled Himself the Son of God. What can be more express? *And the high priest said to Him: I adjure Thee by the living God that Thou tell us if Thou be Christ the Son of God?*¶ and when Jesus answered *I am*,** the high priest, transported with rage, rent his garments, and the whole council unanimously declared *He is guilty of death.*†† They next dragged him before Pilate, and when that Roman judge repeatedly declared, *I find no cause in Him.*‡‡ they exclaimed with one accord, that *He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God*, and that, according to their law, that alone was sufficient, *Secundum legem debet mori quia filium Dei se fecit.*§§ The prophet had said the same. *Quoniam filium Dei se nominat.*

Secondly, to complete the fulfilment of the prophecy, they insulted Him upon the cross in the very words which the Holy Spirit had foretold; and by defying him to come down from the cross, they concluded that He falsely boasted that He was the Son of God. *Let Him now deliver Him, for He said I am the*

* *Isaias* liii. 11.
‡ *Wisd.* ii. 12, 13.
‖ *Wisd.* ii. 21.
** *Mark* xiv. 6.
‡‡ *John* xix. 6.
† *John* xvii. 19.
§ *Wisd.* ii. 18.
¶ *Matt.* xxvi. 63.
†† *Matt.* xxvi. 66.
§§ *John* vii.

*Son of God. Liberet nunc eum : dixit enim quia filius Dei sum.** The prophet had foretold that they would make use of the very word. *If He be the true Son of God He will deliver Him. Si enim filius Dei est liberabit eum.*† Senseless men ! not to recognise their victim or themselves in such clear predictions ; and more senseless still not to see that when they made the very name of Christ and God a cause for His condemnation and death, they declared themselves in the most unquestionable manner to be deicides and murderers of Christ, and they loaded themselves with all the maledictions which had been pronounced in their Scriptures against the authors of such sacrilegious violence. But this blindness was foretold, as well as every other circumstance, and it should therefore be fulfilled. They fell—as the prophet foretold they should—into a fatal error. *Hoc cogitaverunt et erraverunt.* Because their malice should blind them. *Excaecavit enim eos malitia eorum*—and prevent them from knowing the profound secret of God. *Et nescierunt sacramenti Dei.*‡

To sum up in a few words the whole substance and fruit of this discourse. A Messiah had been foretold and expected during four thousand years. Being God and man at the same time, He was destined to reconcile an offended God with guilty men—as man, by sacrificing Himself for the sins of the human race, and as God, by imparting an infinite value to His sacrifice—and thus to restore to His Father the glory of which He had been deprived, and to rebellious creatures the hope which they had lost. It was for Him the ancient just had sighed—it was He whom so many victims and holocausts had prefigured ; it was of Him that all the prophets had spoken. To prepare the world to receive and acknowledge Him, they had delineated His image and detailed His history by anticipation in their writings ; and as nothing could appear more incredible to the world than the humiliations and sufferings of a God, there was also nothing which they had more distinctly foretold—nothing which they had described in more vivid colourings—showing us this Divine mediator plunged in an abyss of ignominy and sorrow—displaying to our view the hideous instruments and the most revolting circumstances of his punishment—the cross, the nails, the scourges, the gall, the vinegar, the spittle, the blows, and keeping the universe in expectation

* *Matt.* xxvii. 43. † *Wisd.* ii. 18.

‡ "These things they thought and were deceived, for their own malice blinded them, and they knew not the secrets of God."—*Wisd.* ii. 21, 22.

of a prodigious event, an extraordinary spectacle, the like of which has never been heard of in the history of nations, or the course of time. Jesus Christ appeared, and all these were fulfilled in His person. He suffered precisely all that the Messiah who had been foretold, was destined to suffer; He dies as the Messiah was fated to die; His persecutors and His murderers say and do all that the persecutors and murderers of the Messiah were appointed to say and to do. There is not the slightest difference between the fulfilment and the prophecy. How, then, can we refrain from concluding, from the passion and death of Jesus, that He is the desired of nations, who is so much celebrated in the Scriptures, and in the ancient traditions of the human race? And as the Messiah is God, why should we not admit that from the exact fulfilment of the prophecies, the passion and death of Jesus ought to be reckoned amongst the direct and positive proofs of His Divinity?

O my God! prepare Thy people to understand these great and affecting truths. Fill their hearts, upon those days when Thy graces flow more abundantly than ever, with those pure, tender, and heavenly sentiments which religion can alone inspire, that they may believe, and hope, and love; that the sceptic may lay aside the pride of his false wisdom, which is a real folly, and may believe; that the sinner may comprehend all that he has a right to expect from infinite mercy, by offering in expiation of his sins the blood of a God shed for his sake, and may hope; that the most obdurate hearts may become sensible to gratitude, and may love, when reflecting upon the incomprehensible goodness of Him, who—infinitely happy in Himself—receiving the adorations of Angels in the highest heavens—has descended into this valley of tears, has clothed Himself in our miseries, has suffered the punishment due to our crimes, and though immortal by His very nature, has readily embraced death to open for us the way which leads to that blessed and eternal life, which is a blessing I wish you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE TRIUMPHS OF THE CHURCH.

FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY.

"Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth."—*Psalm* ciii. 30.

We celebrate to-day the fulfilment of this divine oracle, and the miracles which have been wrought by the long-expected coming of the Holy Spirit. He has at length descended upon the earth, and everything assumes a new appearance there. An idolatrous world is soon changed into a Christian world. A new Church, which had been created in a moment by the operation of this Omnipotent Spirit, has arisen in Judea, but it is destined soon to occupy the whole world. This is the Church which has been foretold by the prophets—of which the synagogue was but a type—which has been founded by the Apostles upon this day—which will be the true holy nation, the inheritor of all the blessings of Heaven, the beloved spouse of the Son of God, the fruitful parent of all the predestined. To that Church belong universality of time and place; to her are promised infallibility of doctrine, perpetuity of duration, and victory in every conflict. She is the house built upon the rock, and though she may sometimes appear to be shaken, yet she can never be overthrown. Storms shall rage against her, and torrents shall assail her in vain; but to the very consummation of ages she will bid defiance to all the assaults of hell, because her foundations are fixed upon the eternal hills; *Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis,** and the hand of the Most High Himself supports her. *Et ipse fundavit eam Altissimus.*†

But at what a crisis do I make use of such language? Is not this a period when facts seem to contradict the magnificence of these promises—when this sacred edifice, which had resisted so many storms during the last eighteen hundred years, seems at last tottering to its fall—when defections from her pale are multiplied—when infidelity gains fresh triumphs every day, its doctrines are every where proudly taught, and the period seems to have at length arrived, when the Christian religion, which of old had triumphed over idolatry, is, in its turn, doomed to surrender the victory to a philosophy which is more conform-

* *Ps.* lxxxvi. 1. † *Ibid.* 5.

able to what is termed the enlightenment and progress of the age we live in?

I have no doubt, my brethren, that such are the thoughts not only of many blind unbelievers, who already imagine that they are sure of victory, but also of that worse than feeble Christian who is unmindful of that unshaken foundation on which his faith rests, and fears that the work of God may be overturned by the power of men and devils. The hopes of the one and the fears of the other are both equally groundless! Heaven and earth shall pass away before a word of the Lord shall be contradicted by such an event as they anticipate.* And, after all, what is there in the present condition of the Church—afflicting though it be—which is calculated to inspire her children with such pusillanimous fears, or her enemies with such presumptuous confidence? "Ah!" methinks some one may say, "do you not see how her glory is faded, how her territory is being more confined, and the number of her believers is decreasing day after day? Is not such visible decay the precursor of an inevitable and speedy fall? How, then, can we persuade ourselves that a falling Church is that Sion which is so blessed by Heaven, to which so many promises seemed to insure an everlasting prosperity, an old age without decay, and an empire without limits?" Hear my reply, you who badly understand the secret of Divine wisdom, and the mystery of omnipotent strength, concealed beneath the guise of apparent weakness. To enable you to comprehend it more clearly, and to dissipate your errors, I now beg to state three propositions, which I hope to demonstrate clearly, and which will form the division of the present discourse. First—That the present condition of the Church—and we admit that it is a humiliating and afflicting one—so far from contradicting what the prophets have foretold respecting it, is, on the contrary, a literal fulfilment of these predictions, and, therefore, a more convincing argument in their favour. Secondly—That the present condition of the Church, in which you suppose that you recognise manifest indications of her speedy ruin, is, on the contrary, a certain indication of her future triumph. Thirdly—That this triumph of the Church has already begun before our eyes, and, in the very condition which seems to you so desperate, is manifest and striking to every attentive observer. And the more astonishing those propositions appear to you, my dear friends, it is, therefore, reasonable that you should more carefully attend to the development of them,

* *Matt.* xxvi. 25.

and consider the arguments which I shall advance in their support.

Oh, Divine Spirit! how great is this subject, and how far beyond my strength! Speak Thyself on a subject so sublime, or place upon my lips those words of fire and light which, when announced of old by those of the Apostles and Evangelists, enlightened and inflamed the world.—*Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—To confirm the faith of the timid Christian, and to confound the presumption of the infidel, we must show, in the first place, that the present calamities of the Church are nothing more than the exact fulfilment of the prophecies which refer to her. Surely we do not require to be told that grand and sublime destinies have been promised by the ancient prophets, and by Jesus Christ Himself to His Church. Although the kingdom of the spouse, like that of Him to whom she is espoused, is not of this world, nevertheless, days of prosperity, of splendour, and of power, have been promised to her even during her pilgrimage here on earth. But we must draw a distinction between each of the periods, for she is destined to pass through various gradations here below. It was the destiny of her early age that it should be characterised by humiliations and sufferings; that the vindictiveness of Jews and gentiles should assail her at her birth; that all the fury of persecution should assail her very cradle; that she would be compelled to grow up in the midst of funeral piles and scaffolds; that she should propagate her offspring by her wounds, and people the earth by making it overflow with her blood. Is not this what the Saviour had clearly foretold respecting her in these manifest terms. *The servant is not greater than his master.** *If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.*† *You shall be hated by all nations for My name's sake.*‡ *You shall stand before governors and kings;*§ *and whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth a service to God.*‖ *The world will make a cruel war upon you; but have confidence, I have overcome the world.*¶ And what does the history of three centuries afford but the literal fulfilment of this Divine prophecy?

To this first period of affliction and trial succeeded another and a much longer season of power and glory—when the Church, victorious through her endurance of tyrants and executioners, appeared as the queen of the nations which it had gained over to the gospel, and in voluntary subjection to the empire of truth, of wisdom, and of virtue. That religion

* *Matt.* x. 24. † *John* xv. 20. ‡ *Matt.* xxiv. 9.
§ *Mark* xiii. 9. ‖ *John* xvi. 2. ¶ *Ibid.* 33.

which had been so long detested and proscribed, became the religion of the whole civilized world. The idols fell prostrate before the image of Him crucified; the bones of the martyrs were brought forth from the graves and catacombs, to be placed upon the altars and encased in gold and precious stones; the magnificence of the churches surpassed that of palaces; the sacred dignity of the Supreme Pontiff was elevated by the veneration of the princes and people above the majesty of kings; the most august heads bowed down before the Vicar and Representative of the Man-God; the gospel became the first of laws, Jesus Christ the first of Masters, and the Church, containing an empire within her bosom, stood beside monarchs in their councils, in the enjoyment of wealth, and dignity, and power, concentrating within herself every species of grandeur, and displaying what could be effected by the word of Him who had said, three hundred years before, to twelve poor fishermen whom He had chosen as His disciples—*All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth.** *As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you.*† Go, little flock—go into the midst of wolves, and fear not: You will suffer at first, but you will reign. *Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you a kingdom.*‡ It is to this second period that all the beautiful and joyous expressions of the prophets relate. Arise, O Jerusalem! cast aside the robes of thy mourning; behold the days of abundance and joy. The children of them that afflict thee shall come bowing down to thee, and all that slandered thee shall worship the steps of thy feet. The gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. They shall come from the ends of the earth, to offer their tributes and to lay their treasures at thy feet. Thou shalt be nursed at the breasts of kings, and thou shalt suck the breasts of the gentiles. Gold and silver and precious stones shall shine upon thy walls.§ To this period also may be referred what is read in the revelation of St. John. That Jesus Christ would reign a thousand years on earth with His saints;‖ that He would bear on His garment written, King of kings and Lord of lords.¶ Our fathers have beheld this glorious reign of the Church—this state of magnificence and wealth—a state which was not essential to her constitution, although it pleased the Lord to endow her with it, either to console her for the persecutions and ignominy which have gone

* *Matt.* xxviii. 18.
† *John* xx. 21.
‡ *Luke* xii. 32.
§ *Isaias, passim.*
‖ *Apoc.* xx. 4, 6.
¶ *Ibid.* xix. 16.

before it, as Isaias declares,* or to show that to Him alone belongs all power, and that He imparts a share of that power to His spouse whenever He pleases, or to show the world what His religion, when associated with the government of human affairs, is capable of effecting for the prosperity of states, for the reformation and support of public morality, for the consolation of mankind, for the progress of science, literature, and the arts—in a word, for all that can contribute to the happiness and glory of nations and individuals. If we consider all these relations, how deeply must we not feel indebted to the long ascendancy of the Christian faith, and to the beneficial influence which it exercised in Europe, from the time of Charlemagne to the close of the last century? It is in this respect, then, that the oracles which relate to the two first ages of the Church are fully verified.

But what do we find in the Sacred Scriptures, in reference to the period which was destined to follow? Here I request your increased attention, my brethren. I shall faithfully relate the words of the sacred writers, and you will be able to determine whether they can be applied to the circumstances in which we are placed at present. St. John assures us that *when the thousand years shall be finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go forth and seduce the nations;* † and our Saviour declares that this seduction will be so great *as to deceive, if possible, even the elect;* ‡ *and because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold;* § and faith shall seem almost extinguished upon earth. ‖ St. Peter, St. Jude, and St. Paul inform us ¶ that there will be an operation of error to believe lying; ** that a generation of scoffing, carnal, and proud men would arise who would make all their glory consist in ensnaring and deceiving—who will despise the obligations of an oath, *sine fœdere*, and the rights of blood and kindred, *parentibus non obedientes*, and every feeling of humanity, *immites*—who shall set peace and order at nought, *sine pace*, and declare themselves the enemies of all lawful authority, *dominationem spernunt*, and blaspheme all Divine and human majesty, *majestatem blasphemant.*†† A new species

* "Because thou wast forsaken, and hated, and there was none that passed through thee; I will make thee to be an everlasting glory, a joy unto generation and generation."—*Isaias* lx. 15.

† *Apoc.* xx. 7. ‡ *Matt.* xxiv. 24. § *Ibid.* 12.

‖ "But yet the Son of man when He cometh shall he find, think you, faith on earth?"—*Luke* xviii. 8.

¶ See 2 *Peter* iii. 3; *Jude* 18, 19; 1 *Tim.* iv. 1.

** 2 *Thess.* ii. 10. †† *Jude* 8.

of infidelity, before unheard of, will then spring up, which will consist, not in embracing any false religion, or in offering incense to any false deity, but in a contemptuous rejection of every worship, and a conceited self-elevation above all that mortals reverence and adore. *Estollitur supra omne quod dicitur Deus aut quod colitur.** The error of this period will not be any error in particular, but a mass and combination of every sort of error—*attendentes spiritibus erroris*†—a universal leaning to all that is false, and an implacable hatred of all truth. *Non crediderunt veritati.*‡ The vice of the age will not be any one passion or disorder in particular; but a passion for evil itself—a thirst and a regard for every iniquity. *In omni seductione iniquitatis.* § The doctrines in repute will no longer be the perverse doctrines invented by the malice of men, but the doctrines of the devils themselves, the philosophy of hell. *Doctrinis dæmoniorum.* || *Secundum operationem Satanæ.*¶ And what will be the success of this mysterious and infernal wisdom? Ah! my brethren, St. John, after having represented it to us under the form of a hideous beast, to which the dragon had communicated great power,** thus denoting its two-fold influence to degrade man to the condition of the brute, and to make him subservient to the spirits of darkness; after having shown us a prostitute, whose name is mystery, sitting upon that beast,†† and having thus exhibited upon one side the corruption of its maxims, and on the other the secrecy with which it conceals itself—its subterraneous assemblies, its oaths, its imitations, and its impure mysteries—after having described it by these marks, what does He add? That to it there shall be given a strong and powerful voice, to make falsehood and blasphemy be heard throughout the universe, and to calumniate God and His Saints in every place,‡‡ by which he means that dreadful outcry of blasphemies and calumnies which is excited everywhere by the clamorous language and the countless publications of infidelity with which the world is filled. But what does the Apostle add? Is it that such audacious impiety will excite the horror and indignation of the human race? No, my dear brethren. He says that the whole earth will follow the beast, and be filled with universal transports of admiration

* 2 *Thess.* ii. 4. † 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. ‡ 2 *Thess.* ii. 11. § *Ibid* 10.
|| 1 *Tim.* iv. 1. ¶ 2 *Thess.* ii. 9. ** *Apoc.* xiii. 1.

†† "And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast . . . . . and on her forehead was written a name—Mystery."—*Ibid.* xvii. 5.

‡‡ "And there was given to him, speaking great things and blasphemies."—*Apoc.* xiii. 2.

for him;* that he shall be adored as a new divinity;† and that, full of confidence in his strength, and certain of his victory, they shall exclaim from every side, "Who is like the beast, and who can withstand his power?" *Quis similis bestiæ et quis potest pugnare cum illo?*‡ Finally, that he shall bear sway over every tribe, and tongue, and people; and that, with the exception of those whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb, all men will bear the character of the beast either on their foreheads—by the possession of his doctrines; or in their right hands—by the practice of his works. *Faciet omnes habere characterem in dextera manu sua, aut in frontibus suis.*§

It is therefore true, my brethren, that the prophets have known and foretold all the circumstances of this terrible trial which occasions your alarm. They have beheld the apparent feebleness and humiliation of the Church, the defection of her children, the strength of her enemies, their means, their success, and this amazing blindness of nearly a whole generation, which has enrolled itself beneath their banners. Have those divinely inspired men trembled at this? Have they feared that the promises of the Lord would not be fulfilled, and that His Church would be abandoned? Ah! so far from that, they ridiculed the vain hopes of infidelity, and its short-lived triumph, for they saw its close, as well as every other fact regarding it, and they marked out its precise duration. Hear this very Apostle, St. John, who is after delineating such a true and alarming picture. He will tell you that the days of the beast are numbered; that He has received the power to do injury only for a very short time, which he represents by a period of some months; *Data est ei potestas facere menses quadraginta duos,*‖ and when this period had expired, and he sought him and felt astonished that he could see him no longer, the Angel of the Lord said to him: "Why dost thou wonder? The beast which thou sawest was and is not. He had arisen out of the abyss and has been again cast down into it.¶ Thus must all perish who wage war against the Lamb, because He is the supreme Lord of all, and to Him belongs the empire."** At these words a concert of praises and hymns of victory resound from the summit of heaven as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders,†† and all is consummated. Such, then, my brethren,

* "And all the earth was in admiration after the beast."—*Apoc.* xiii. 3.
† *Ibid.* 8. ‡ *Ibid.* 4 § *Ibid.* 16.
‖ "And power was given him to do two and forty months."—*Apoc.* v.
¶ *Ibid.* xvii. 8. ** *Ibid.* 14. †† *Ibid.* xix. 1, 6.

will be the termination of this formidable persecution of infidelity, as well as every other. But let us not anticipate. The object of this first part has been merely to show that there is nothing in the present afflicting condition of the Church but what has been foretold, and that it is the necessary fulfilment of the divine oracles. This has been proved. We shall now proceed to show that this very condition which we deplore, affords an undoubted assurance of triumph to the Church.

II. Experience ought to have made our minds long since at ease, with respect to the destinies of an imperishable Church, whose preservation is no less evidently the work of Divine Omnipotence than its primitive institution has been. How often has she seemed, during the last eighteen hundred years, not merely on the brink of destruction, but, according to all human conception, lost beyond the power of recovery, swallowed up by the tempest, and leaving scarce a wreck behind? And has she not as often returned glorious and triumphant from the midst of death, from the depths of the abyss? Trace her history through successive ages, and you will find that her deepest humiliations have invariably been the prelude and the signal of her most glorious victories; you will find that every one of her enemies fell prostrate before her at the very moment when he seemed to have inflicted a mortal wound upon her, and even dared to boast of his success; so that she is never so formidable or so invincible as when she seems reduced to the lowest extremity, because the power which sustains her is not her own but that of God Himself, whose might is made perfect in the infirmity of His creatures. *Virtus in infirmitate perficitur.** To confirm what I advance, and still more to console our faith and to animate our courage, I shall now point out some of the views of that magnificent picture which may be discerned in the annals of this ever-persecuted and ever-victorious Church.

In the first place, contemplate her in collision with the synagogue and the rebellious Jews. Jesus Christ had fallen beneath their assaults; fifty days had just elapsed since He expired in torments, overwhelmed with the maledictions of the people; His body had been enclosed in the sepulchre, and the stone which covered it sealed with the seal of public authority. His timid disciples concealed in the supper-room, could not venture to appear abroad; His name was no longer mentioned; no voice, except the voice of His enemies, was heard in Jerusalem, and no power recognised but theirs. All

* 2 *Cor.* xii. 9.

is therefore lost; the new religion is buried for ever in its founder's grave, and the synagogue remains in the undisturbed enjoyment of its triumph. But a cry of resurrection suddenly resounds through the deicidal city; tongues of fire have appeared: the Apostles hasten forth from their retreat, like men influenced by a divine spirit; they speak every language at once; they proclaim that the Crucified lives—that they have beheld Him—that He is the Messiah foretold by the prophets—that He must be adored; splendid miracles confirm their assertions; they are believed; the murderers of the Saviour are converted in thousands; the people hasten in crowds to listen to the new preachers; the first Christian Church is established at Jerusalem—even in sight of Calvary; other churches are founded throughout Judea. In vain does the synagogue rave. Agitated, forlorn, stricken by the blow of death, she struggles for a time and soon falls prostrate; the city and the temple fall with her in the same crash; the Jewish people are scattered throughout the whole earth, and the gospel is spread amongst the nations. Was there ever a victory more speedy or miraculous? But was there ever a more profound annihilation than that which had immediately preceded it?

But now behold a still more formidable enemy. The whole Roman empire—a world in itself!—has conspired against twelve poor fishermen from the lake of Genezareth, who have conceived the daring enterprise of making the universe obey the law of Christ. All the power of the Cæsars, all the authority of the senate, the pontiffs, and the magistrates, all the illusions of the false gods, all the skill of writers and sophists, the might of armies, the blind enmity of the populace, the cruelty of executioners, the fear of punishments and tortures—all these are employed—they are all exhausted—during more than three hundred years, to destroy the infant religion and to secure the triumph of idolatry. At length, after all their persevering and barbarous efforts, a final persecution, more furious than all the others, seems to have accomplished the wishes of the persecutors. They flatter themselves with having extinguished Christianity in the rivers of blood which they have caused to flow, and they solemnly proclaim that this detested religion has disappeared from off the face of the earth. Read this proud inscription—"To Dioclesian, the new Jupiter, and to Maximin, the new Hercules, in commemoration of their having at length abolished the Christian name, and destroyed the superstition of Christ throughout the whole world.' *Nomine Christianorum deleto . . . . superstitione Christi ubique deleta.*"

Is this true? Oh, God of omnipotence! is Thy Church destroyed? These monuments were scarce completed, when the youthful Constantine, while yet a pagan, warned by a mysterious dream and a sign in the heavens, displays the standard of the Cross, enters Rome in triumph, and plants the sacred symbol of salvation there. All fall prostrate before it at once; joy bursts forth on every side, and the universe is amazed to find itself Christian. This is the fall of paganism and its empire, and all the efforts of the impious Julian to restore it will be unavailing. Pagan Rome, the queen of nations and the centre of idolatry, will perish within a century after this, and give place to Christian Rome, which will continue to be the centre of true religion, and the metropolis of the Catholic world, even to the consummation of time. Oh, Church of the living God! how little shouldst thou dread the shouts of victory and the insulting trophies of thine enemies, who are never so near their fall as when they foolishly imagine that they hold thee, crushed in abasement at their feet.

From this period forward, assaults from without are at an end. Prepare thyself to endure more dangerous and more obstinate conflicts from within. Heresies and schisms shall continue the warfare which has been commenced by an unbelieving synagogue and an idolatrous world. O God! to what extremities will Thy Church be reduced, when, even under Christian emperors, this multitude of sects, enraged against each other, but all animated by the same hatred against her, will wound her heart, and tear her very vitals. Arians, Nestorians, Donatists, Pelagians—who could repeat their names, or refrain from shuddering at the recollection of the frightful storm which they raised? What disturbance and confusion throughout the kingdom of Jesus Christ! In every direction were to be seen altars arrayed in hostility against altars, pulpits against pulpits, pastors against pastors, and congregations against congregations; error supported by power, raising its voice above that of truth; orthodox councils and councils opposed to the true faith; the Church launching its thunders against heresy, and heresy in its turn, anathematizing the Church; the east and the west divided into opposite factions; the faithful people almost uncertain what belief they should embrace; men's minds unsettled and wavering; all doctrines confounded; light combined with darkness! Who will restore this second chaos to light and order? Who will make the sun of truth shine forth in the radiance of that light which had been so long obscured? Who will make the earth to arise

once more from the depth of those waters beneath which it was all nigh sunk and engulphed? Who, but Thyself, O great God? Who dost not suffer the night to usurp the empire of the day; who commandest the waters of the abyss, and they obey Thy word; and Thou never shalt permit that the gates of hell should prevail against Thy Church, for so thou hast sworn! At the voice of this God the gloomy shadows of falsehood will be dissipated; schisms and heresies will pass away; they shall rush like torrents from the earth, and disappear for ever: whilst the Church, remaining unshaken upon that rock, on which she has been founded, shall look forth from the summit of the holy mountain, upon the angry ocean of human prejudice and passion, and behold from day to day those waves which raged around her in vain, falling broken and powerless at her feet.

Come, then, after so many enemies have been already vanquished—infidels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—you who are so vain of your own intellect and strength—come to be conquered in your turn, and prepare a new triumph for the Church of Jesus Christ. *Congregamini et vincimini.** Summon together all your phalanxes of Deists, Atheists, Sceptics, Materialists, Indifferentists, bad men of every system, of every country, and every sect—marshal them all under the same banner—forget, if possible, everything which divides you, and let one sentiment alone actuate and unite you—let it be the merciless hatred of the Catholic name—strengthen your ranks, and form a countless host, that your defeat may be the more remarkable. *Confortamini et vincimini.*† Let nothing stop your career—regard every means as lawful which is capable of destroying that religion which alone can presume to claim the attributes of truth or Divinity—let falsehood or truth, perfidy or violence, hypocritical respect or insulting contempt, the maxims of toleration or the fury of persecution, calumny or the sword—let all these be unscrupulously employed, and they will all be unavailing. *Accingimini et vincimini.*‡ Concert your plans skilfully, adopt precautions which cannot fail exhaust all the resources of your wisdom, and it shall be convicted of folly. *Inite consilium et dissipabitur.*§ Finally, assert, prophesy aloud, that the last hour of Christianity is come, that the imperishable Church will inevitably fall beneath your

* "Gather yourselves together and be overcome."—*Isaias* viii. 9.
† "Strengthen yourselves and be overcome."—*Ibid.*
‡ "Gird yourselves and be overcome."—*Ibid.*
§ "Take counsel together and it shall be defeated."—*Ibid* x.

assaults—and your prophecies will be lost like an empty sound in the air, whilst the sacred oracles which predict the ruin of all those impious confederacies will continue to be fulfilled to the end of time, as they have been fulfilled during the last six thousand years. *Loquimini verbum et non fiet.**

Be not astonished, my brethren, that the Church, even in the midst of her calamities—even when assailed by so many dangers, bids a stern defiance to her enemies, and despises all their threats, as she relies upon the unfailing assurance of protection from the Almighty, and of the victory which He gives. *Quia nobis cum Deus.*† Ah! when she was wealthy and powerful, it was not in her strength and riches she confided; but now, when deprived of her treasures and the marks of her ancient greatness—destitute of that support which she derived so long from human laws and the mighty ones of this earth—disowned and repudiated by her own children—retaining no one of those privileges which she once enjoyed, except to struggle alone and unassisted against every injustice and insult which is heaped upon her—she feels no loss whilst she retains the promises and the cross of her Divine Spouse; and she is no less fearless in the storms which assail her old age than she had been in those which ranged round her cradle.

What, then, can you effect, wicked unbelievers? Will you lead all your combined sects to the conflict against her? But has she not seen the Jew and the pagan, and the philosophers of the academy and portico, and a thousand different sects, and emperors and nations all leagued together for her ruin? And has she not overcome them all? And what are these, after all, but the coalition of various errors, which oppose and destroy each other, against the truth which stands alone—that truth which is indestructible by its own nature, and which finds an invincible strength in its very unity?

Will you strive to crush her beneath the weight of falsehood and calumny? But are you not aware that what is false is always feeble; that falsehood vanishes at once in presence of the truth—like darkness before the light; and that the success of a cause is desperate when its advocates are driven to the necessity of making an undisguised profession of calumny and imposture?

But your whole boast consists in this—you carry the crowd with you. I am not surprised at this, for it is written, that all the earth will follow the beast. You carry the crowd with

* "Take counsel together and it shall be defeated."—*Isaias* viii. 10.
† "Because God is with us."—*Ibid.*

you. But how? Not so much by convincing their minds as by corrupting their hearts. Your doctrine flatters every passion, and favours every vice. Hence arises your success. But vice, as well as falsehood, lasts only for a season, whilst virtue as well as truth, has a title which can never fail, and it must sooner or later recover its authority. You carry the crowd with you. Has not the gospel declared, that the multitude hastens to its own destruction? But if you make the broad way broader still, will you prevent it from becoming the road to perdition, both for yourselves and for those who follow you? And if you make the narrow way more narrow still, will you prevent it from being the certain way of salvation for all who walk in it?

What else will you do? You will leave the Church desolate by multiplied defections. Alas! they will be far more numerous—and she is well aware of it—when the period of the great apostacy shall have arrived. The Church will weep over her children who abandon her, because she loves them, and because to leave her is to perish. But she will bring forth other children to wipe away her tears: and, whether tranquil or disturbed, she shall continue to the end of time to bring forth all the elect, and not one of them shall perish. What, then, will be the advantage of those defections of which you boast, for although you should crowd the reprobate Babylon with still greater numbers, you shall not take away a single inhabitant from the holy and immortal Jerusalem! Ah! the benefit which you shall soon derive will be the ignominy of having been the seducers of your fellow-men, and the instruments of hell to thrust them along with yourselves into the eternal abyss. Instead of destroying the Church of Jesus Christ, your excesses and your extravagancies will only serve, as I have shown you, to prepare a new triumph for her. What do I say? This triumph has already begun before our eyes, as I shall presently demonstrate.

III. So little attention is bestowed, at the present day, upon those miracles which are daily wrought in favour of the Church, that I may, perhaps, be asked with astonishment, not altogether free from contempt, how I could recognize her triumph where her humiliations and misfortunes are alone conspicuous. Nevertheless, my brethren, I do not go far enough when I speak of a triumph which has merely begun. I should say, with more propriety, that the Church has already gained a series of triumphs over her enemies, even before our own eyes, and that, although she has never experienced more dreadful trials, yet she has never come forth from those trials

with greater glory than in our own days. Allow me to remind you briefly of facts which are of recent occurrence and public notoriety.

The first triumph of the Church, at this later period, consists in the overthrow of false science. I believe, my brethren, that since the establishment of Christianity, human wisdom or folly has never made such vigorous efforts to destroy that wisdom which is from above, as it has made during the century which has just elapsed. A mighty coalition of the learned had been formed with the express object of convicting the inspired writers of ignorance or imposture. These presumptuous men apportioned the whole range of science amongst certain members of their society, and devoted themselves to labours almost unparalleled. They examined, at the same time, the antiquities of nations, the laws of nature, the course of the stars in the firmament, the revolutions of the globe, its surface and its interior, the courses of rivers and seas, all things animate and inanimate—and they called upon heaven, earth, and ocean, upon man with his reason and faculties, upon philosophy with its subtleties and its abstractions, upon history with its facts, its dates, and its monuments, to bear witness against the truth—against the credibility of our sacred writings, and the correctness of our doctrines. Each day brought new discoveries, new evidences against Divine Revelation, and most manifest proofs of its incompatibility, with the most certain knowledge, and the most undoubted facts. Egypt contributed its constellations engraved on obelisks, and the East its famous chronological tables, to furnish contradictions to Moses and to our belief. The whole edifice of faith seemed to crumble gradually to pieces, and to totter upon its foundations. Mankind felt astonished how the whole world could so long have looked upon such manifest errors, as if they were sacred truths; and praises without end were lavished upon those extraordinary men whose genius and learning had, at length, undeceived the human race, and led forth reason from its tedious childhood. But what has been the final result of all their exertions? The same inquiries persevered in—the same studies pursued with closer investigation—have forced the conviction upon mankind, that these very men had been themselves the dupes of the grossest delusion; their inventions and systems have disappeared like phantoms; their objections, when subjected to a more rigid scrutiny, have been converted into arguments in support of that religion which they so vainly endeavoured to destroy; the monuments which had been brought from so great a distance, at such enormous expense, to testify against

her, have borne witness in her favour; more correct calculations and more accurate observations have again secured an irrefragable authority for Scripture—for its narratives and its dates—which men vainly flattered themselves that they had consigned for ever to derision. What confusion for false science! what a triumph for the Church! and with how great reason may she not, therefore, exclaim—"Philosophers and sages, what is now become of your speculations and your discoveries? Where are your cosmogonies and your systems now? *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?** Your senseless theories have vanished, to make room for others more senseless still; and these must also vanish in their turn; and what shall finally remain except that word which shall never pass away—a fact which your example confirms along with so many others?" God confounds the wisdom of pretended sages, and every science which rises in rebellion against His eternal truth. *Perdam sapientiam sapientum et prudentiam prudentum reprobabo.*†

The second triumph of the Church consists in the palms of those martyrs which she has recently produced. The Church of Jesus Christ had enjoyed an undisturbed repose for many years. Her conflicts in by-gone days, and all the blood and labour which it had cost her to establish the religion of the true God upon earth, were already forgotten. All the cruel persecutions of by-gone ages, and the heroism of the primitive faithful, which history recorded, were either regarded by an unbelieving world as exaggerations and fables, or attributed to that enthusiasm which novelty inspires, or to that fervour in the beginning which sometimes urges men to the performance of valorous deeds. Let us see, then, whether this sacred fire was extinguished, after eighteen hundred years, when the Church was summoned, in her old age, to endure the most violent assaults. You recollect, my brethren, when laws, which changed her divine constitution and contradicted that faith which she professed, were sought to be forced upon her—when she was compelled either to submit to them, or to expose herself to all the consequences of the most merciless vengeance—did she waver a single moment? Ah! methinks we shall hear the voices of those three hundred and thirty bishops and forty thousand priests who, by their magnanimous refusal of perjury, cheerfully encountered every sacrifice and every danger. Did

* 1 *Cor.* i. 20.

† "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject."—1 *Cor.* i. 19.

the most faint expression of regret escape from a single individual amongst them, at the loss of dignity, of prosperity, of liberty, or of life itself? Follow them into exile, to prisons, to the scaffold, to those floating sepulchres where they suffered a thousand torments worse than death itself; did a murmur, or complaint, escape the lips of any one of them? I appeal to those rivers whose waters swallowed up so many generous confessors, and those walls, sacred for evermore, within which so many martyrs, struck down by the same sword, mingled their blood and their expiring sighs—was there even one among them all from whom the sight of immediate death could extort the least indication of weakness? Was there one who, in the very agonies of death, did not fervently renew his vows of fidelity to God? And you, generous lands! who received so many glorious exiles—tell us did not their virtue win the admiration of your inhabitants, not even excepting those who were strangers to their faith? Was not the name of Catholic more revered, and a unanimous homage rendered to that ancient Church, their mother, which had taught them such heroic devotedness? O Church! Spouse of Christ, whose greatest glory is to shed thy blood for thy spouse! these were not thy ministers alone—they were also thy children of every condition, of every age, and sex—who manifested their generosity in laying down their lives for the faith. Those days of bitter affliction were the days of thy power and triumph: for in those days conversions were frequent, and deeds of heroic virtue innumerable, and thou dost appear less beauteous amidst all the splendour and pomp of thy greatness than in those days when thy only decorations were thy own wounds, and the crowns of thy martyrs.

The third triumph of the Church consists in the admission which has been extorted from her most inveterate enemies, that she is necessary for the happiness and prosperity of nations. The new philosophy was most indefatigable in asserting, for the last sixty years, that superstition—by which it meant the Christian and Catholic faith—was the sole cause of the miseries of mankind; that if her yoke were broken, and human reason recognised as the only true divinity upon earth, the age of gold would once more return to nations blessed with light and freedom. A corrupt and infidel generation believed that promise, and anxiously sighed for that mighty revolution which, by banishing God from the concerns of men, was destined to make society prosperous and happy. The most dreadful chastisement that could be inflicted upon such a desire was to allow its fulfilment. Heaven, in its just indignation, suffered

it; and we have had a fatal experience of the result. Religion was proscribed—its worship and its laws abolished—its ministers pursued and exterminated, as if they were public malefactors—God had altars no longer, and reason run mad, had temples erected to its service. You are not ignorant of what followed; and it is not my intention to draw that appalling picture. I shall merely observe, that when this divorce was pronounced between heaven and earth, the moral order suddenly witnessed a change similar to that which must occur in the order of nature if the light of day was extinguished, and the elements thrown into confusion. This country which, after fifteen centuries of Christianity, had attained the summit of civilization, suddenly fell into the lowest abyss of barbarism. Decency, and law, and humanity, and all the observances of civilized society became unknown amongst us. The most savage nations blushed at the customs which we observed, at the language which we spoke, at the laws which governed us, at the prodigious excesses of which we were every day guilty. We presented no other appearance but that of chaos and hell, until at last those wretches, alarmed at the work which their own hands had made—seeing that the abyss which they had opened was likely to swallow up themselves along with their victims—and despairing of being able to impede the ravages of the torrent after they had levelled the banks which confined it—called to their aid that very religion which they had endeavoured to destroy, and opened, with their own hands, those temples of the true God which had escaped their fury, and restored some degree of liberty to His worship. From that period calamities began to diminish gradually; and the most obstinate unbelievers became so fully satisfied that reconciliation with the Church was the only means of security, that when a man, who afterwards became so famous, arose from their society, and obtained possession of the supreme power, he considered it impossible to give a solid foundation to law, or authority, without having recourse to the Apostolic See—restoring their lawful bishops and pastors to the people—and making the morality of the Gospel the only basis of social order. What a glorious tribute was thus rendered to the persecuted Church! What a solemn retractation of so many calumnies! What an admission that morality, social virtue, and the very existence of the state, cannot be preserved without her assistance! Neither can it be denied that the return to the faith of our fathers is the exact period of the restoration of science, of literature, of commerce, of industry, of the arts, of all those things for which so much enthusiasm is now dis-

played—all of which, and a great deal more, must have perished under the rule of Atheism. Oh, holy religion! there is another triumph which I hope thou shalt never enjoy. It is that triumph which thou shouldst inevitably obtain from the new and awful calamities into which the world would again be plunged by another experiment of what philosophy could effect for the benefit of mankind without thy assistance.

Her fourth triumph consists in the miraculous preservation of the Apostolic See, and the supremacy of the Roman Pontiffs. When Jesus Christ established the See of Peter, He promised it an eternal duration, and defied all the powers of hell to effect its overthrow. Hell has not forgotten this defiance, and ceased not, during the last eighteen hundred years, to direct all its energies against that imperishable See. Twice within our own days has it flattered itself that it had crushed this holy See, and even dared to sing aloud its victory against Christ. But, O great God! how short-lived was its joy, and by how great a miracle of Thy right hand hast Thou sustained the Pontiff's throne, which seemed to have lain broken and scattered in the dust! Have we not seen thee overturn, in one moment, a colossus of power which trampled upon the world—which extended its dominion, and gained new strength day after day—before which sceptres and crowns were humbled! What other hand than Thine, O Lord! struck with dizziness that famous general whose enterprises had always been skilfully concerted, and crowned with success, until Thy power smote him! Who else, besides Thee, employed the elements themselves to conquer armies that were before invincible; and with a blast of the north-wind, scattered, like withered leaves, those countless legions which seemed marshalled to subdue the world? Who but Thyself, O Lord! brought sovereigns and states, who were divided in their objects, their interests, their policy, and their religion, to be united in an identity of design and feeling—brought even schismatical and heterodox princes from every quarter of the earth to assist the head of the Church, to break his chains with their own hands, and to bring him back, as it were, in their arms, to that See of Rome, whose authority and whose rights they denied? O, Church of Rome! why shouldst thou fear, when even in thy greatest dangers, that God who protects thee arms thy very enemies to defend thee, gives the victory for Thy sake, and compels them to draw Thy car of triumph?

Let us conclude that we have no reason to tremble for that Church which cannot perish; but let us tremble for her enemies; let us tremble for her rebellious children who tear her heart

asunder: let us tremble for ourselves, if we are not so obedient to her laws, or so docile to her salutary lessons as we ought to be; and let the lesson which we derive from this discourse be, to redouble our reverence and love for that blessed mother of all the elect who, militant and afflicted here below, will be eternally glorious and triumphant in heaven, which I pray you may all enjoy, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE DIVINITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION PROVED BY ITS MYSTERIES.

FOR TRINITY SUNDAY.

"We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery—a wisdom which is hidden."—1 *Cor.* ii. 7.

THIS *mystery* in which the profound wisdom of God conceals itself beneath impenetrable veils from conceited reason, and exhibits itself to humble faith, is the Christian religion, which, as it is altogether composed of an immense series of incomprehensible and divine mysteries, is styled a mystery by excellence in the words of my text, as it is more than once designated in the gospel, under the title of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven. The mind of man, which is so short-sighted and narrow, should not feel astonished that the secrets of Infinite intelligence, which are revealed through mere condescension to his weakness, contain depths which he is unable to fathom. It is rather his duty to accept, with gratitude, the divine light which is shed upon him, and to bow down with reverential awe in adoration of those sacred shadows which that light reflects. But such are not the sentiments which pride inspires. It chooses to blaspheme what it does not know, rather than submit its judgment to those truths which are beyond its comprehension. Hence it is that as our age is, in a remarkable degree, the age of pride, it must accordingly be an age of scepticism, and, therefore, we should not feel surprised that the sublime mysteries of the Christian faith should be regarded—as they were formerly regarded by the Jew and the pagan—as a scandal and a folly—a sacred and a happy folly of which we are not ashamed; but, on the contrary, we regard them as our greatest glory, and in proportion as the objects of our faith surpass our comprehension we more earnestly profess to vene-

rate and to believe them. This is what excites the scorn of a profane and audacious philosophy; this is what it treats as childish credulity and a cowardly desertion of what it considers to be the most undoubted prerogative of human reason. But such high-sounding terms shall not intimidate us. Not content with treating such unmerited reproaches with contempt, we shall, upon this day, refute them triumphantly, and overturn the very foundation of infidelity by proving that nothing can be better adapted to a Divine religion—that nothing is more essential to it than doctrines which are incomprehensible to human reason. At present we do not undertake to defend any mystery in particular, but to vindicate the propriety of mysteries in general, and to turn back upon the enemies of the faith that objection which they most commonly advance against us. We shall accordingly show that the incomprehensible nature of mysteries furnishes no argument against the Divinity of the Christian religion.

Before we enter upon the subject, we cannot refrain from deploring the condition of sinners at the present day. Alas! my dear friends, when our fathers assembled in the holy place, upon days of religious solemnity, Christian preachers did not ascend their pulpits to justify and to defend the sacred doctrines of our faith, but to propose them to the pious veneration, gratitude, and love of a faithful people, who heard them with docility. How consoling was the duty in those days to exercise the Divine ministry of the word, and to pour the doctrine of truth and salvation, and the living lights and abundant consolations, of which it is the source, into the souls of those who were well prepared to receive them? But, alas! to what an extremity are we now reduced! After eighteen centuries of Christianity we are obliged to announce Jesus Christ to the children of His Church almost as a stranger and unknown God—to prove repeatedly what so many oracles and prodigies, the blood of so many martyrs, the conversion of an idolatrous world, and the reverence of so many generations have already proved and consecrated during centuries gone by—again to refute sophisms which have been a thousand times refuted and confounded—and in the very bosom of Catholicity to speak a language which seems adopted of infidel generations alone. Great God! when will there be an end to this contention of falsehood against truth, and of darkness against the light? When shall we be able to cast aside those afflicting and dry discussions, to discourse of wisdom with the perfect, and to seek, in Thy holy word, not the means of confounding the daring of impiety, but what may console the faith, and

animate the hope of a flock obedient to Thy voice, and desirous of Thy heavenly promises. Oh, powerful Mary, we implore thy protection. *Ave Maria.*

In order that the incomprehensible nature of mysteries should furnish a conclusive argument against the Divinity of religion, it is necessary to prove either 1st, that no truths which are incomprehensible to man exist; 2nd, that God has no right to require that man should believe truths which he does not comprehend; or, 3rd, that the mysteries of Christianity are not incomprehensible truths; as we maintain them to be; but that they are—as blasphemers have the hardihood to assert—falsehoods and errors concealed beneath a venerable and sacred veil. Now, it is not only impossible to prove either of these three propositions, but any one of them cannot be maintained for a moment, with any degree of reason.

I. What a senseless paradox must it not be to maintain that no truths exist which are beyond the comprehension of man, or, which comes to the same thing, that the intellect of man is universal and infinite like the intellect of God himself. Oh, man! how great soever your presumption and your pride may be, I appeal to your judgment. On whatever side you turn your eyes, whether you fix them upon yourself or upon the objects which surround you, whether you turn them to the heavens above, or cast them down to the earth which you tread upon, do you not every where encounter limits to retard you, or depths and obscurities to confound you? In the first place, you find them within yourself. If you know all things, most certainly you ought to know yourself. Tell me, then, what are you? And to begin with what is most noble in your being, what is that substance which constitutes the principle of volition, of thought, of deliberation and action within you, the source of sensation, of motion, and life; in a word, your soul? Nothing is more present, nothing more interwoven with your existence. It is, as it were, the groundwork of your being; it is your very self. Again, I ask you, what is this substance? Endeavour to grasp it within your thoughts, to examine it, to analyse it; and tell me at length what is it? You cannot, and here you are cut short at the first step. Seek within you for the place where your memory has, as it were, accumulated and amassed the treasures of by-gone times; that is to say, an immense treasure of ideas and facts, and acquirements, and recollections which it always keeps ready for your disposal, whilst you are unable to discover whence it derives them on every occasion to present them to you. What a mystery this memory is! But your will, your imagination, your

reason itself, which is the faculty by which you can learn to comprehend any thing—can you comprehend itself? And this countless multitude of reflections, and sentiments, and desires, and fears, and tastes, and aversions which arise within you every moment, which succeed each other with such amazing rapidity, which occupy your attention, or amuse your fancy, or cause affliction, or pleasure, or agitation, or torture to your feelings. Do you understand what they are? and are you able to explain their nature to me? Let not my questions exhaust your patience. There is no fact which you know with so much certainty, no fact which you feel so intimately, as that you live. But what is your life? It is not mere existence; for inanimate things exist, and yet they do not live. It is not thought, for there are beings which live and which do not think. It is not motion, for the world moves, and it would be madness to assert that it lives It is not feeling, for there are certain states in which a person ceases to feel without ceasing to live. What, then, is your life? What precise notion can you form of it? You cannot explain it; and here is a mystery which you cannot fathom. Let us now pass on to what is more palpable and more material in your being; and let us see whether even here you may not also encounter problems which are no less insoluble. Is there any one of your senses, or of your minutest organs, which will not astonish and confound your intellect, not with one wonder but with a multitude of astonishing wonders? This absolute power which you possess over your limbs, you know not whence it is derived, or in what it consists, or how you will put it into operation. You have never seen those wonderful springs which are distributed throughout every part of your body, which set every limb in motion with such facility and in so many different ways; you are ignorant of their number, of their complicated machinery, and of their various combinations. How, then, do you make them obey you so punctually, and find every one of them ready at each given point to shape it to whatsoever action you please? "I cannot understand it," you say. "I will it, and it is accomplished. I am ignorant of the rest; and for me as well as for the philosopher who has most diligently studied the structure of the human frame it is an impenetrable mystery." What mysteries have we already, my dear friend, without going beyond yourself? And how many others could I not make you remark there? Have you never reflected upon the wonderful sense of seeing, which furnishes you with so much enjoyment? What is smaller than your eye? But what more vast and

varied than the spectacle which is continually displayed there? What an incredible multitude of objects is depicted there simultaneously and without confusion, together with their size, their proportions, their colours, their situations, and their distances? The earth, the heavens, and the sea, are not too extensive to be contained within so minute a space. The whole universe is painted in its full size upon this almost imperceptible point. Who can comprehend such works unless He who has created this world, and formed the eye of man to behold this great and magnificent picture? The senses of hearing and speech furnish no less wonderful phenomena. Who can explain, my brethren, what occurs here now whilst I speak and you listen? What is this wonderful variety of inflexions and movements which my voice, my tongue, and my lips form, almost unconsciously to myself, to produce all these sounds which issue so rapidly from my mouth? What is the power which transports them, in the twinkling of an eye, to all the extremities of this edifice? What is the inconceivable multiplication, by means of which every one of these sounds, although each of them is one and indivisible, is present at the same time at as many points as there are hearers assembled here, whereas it does altogether, and at the same moment, penetrate the ear of every one amongst you? And what is the [illegible] connection which these gross and material sounds have with the thoughts, the emotions, and frequently, the transports which arise in the soul, according as these sounds [illegible] other [illegible] man? you are incomprehensible to your very self. What you experience every day—what you do most naturally, and with the least exertion—what you carry within you—what you are—all these are so many enigmas for your feeble and conceited reason. Tell us after all this, that it is not in the power of God to possess secrets which that reason cannot penetrate.

If you go out of yourself, [illegible] you not find on every side, not only in the [illegible] of the heavens, where bodies of immeasurable size, every one of which is a world—roll millions of leagues above your heads, but in the smallest atom which you tread upon, whereas you know not what matter or what an atom is? What mysteries there are, not only in the depths of the ocean, which you cannot fathom, but in the grain of sand upon its shore, which you cannot analyse! What mysteries there are to confound you, not only in the almost infinite fecility of the earth, but in a single grain of corn, the reproduction of which you will never be able to comprehend, although it is one of the most

ordinary phenomena of nature! What mysteries are there in the formation and instinct of the vilest animal, in the structure and habits of an insect! Every thing which surrounds you, surpasses your understanding. The air which you breathe and which is the source of your life--time which regulates your occupations and constitutes the measure of your existence—this light of day which you not only see, but which enables you to see every thing else are all so many things which you are unable to explain. There is nothing in this world but has its nature and essence concealed from you. *And I understood that man can find no reason of all those works of God that are done under the sun; and the more he shall labour to seek so much the less shall he find; yea, though the wise man should say that he knoweth it, he shall not be able to find it.** I shall not ask you, then, whether any truths exist which are incomprehensible to man, but I ask you whether there be a single truth, even in the natural and physical order, which is not incomprehensible in some respect or another! I ask you to name any science—without even excepting that of simple calculation--which has not its peculiar obscurities and mysteries at which the human mind must not stop short and acknowledge that there are limits which it cannot pass. What, then, must be the case with respect to supernatural sciences and things divine? How shall that intellect whose limits render it incapable of grasping what is so limited, be able to embrace what is essentially, and in every sense, infinite! You have not, therefore, arrived at the mere rudiments of true philosophy -you who evidently have reflected upon nothing—you who disdainfully smile at the bare name of mystery, and who seem unable to comprehend how a philosopher can admit that to be true which he is not in a position to understand. Listen to the Coryphæus of our infidel sophists, the notorious citizen of Geneva, who has raised the imaginary rights of reason to such a height, and whom you love to adduce as an oracle. He will tell you "that impenetrable mysteries surround us on every side; that we are ignorant of our very selves; that we know neither our own nature nor the principle which actuates us; that, nevertheless, we are so foolish as that we desire to investigate and to know every thing; that there is one fact of which we are altogether ignorant, and that is, the unconsciousness of our limited knowledge."† He will tell you, moreover, that "the intellectual world is full of truths which, although incomprehensible, are, nevertheless, undeniable." There is not a single one of our

* *Eccles.* viii. 17. † Emile.

infidel writers but makes a similar admission in terms no less explicit.*

It is in this respect, my brethren, that these false sages, who are always so inconsistent with themselves, carry contradiction to its greatest excess: for whilst they declare that all the works of God are incomprehensible, they deny that religion can be the work of God, for no other reason than because it is incomprehensible. "No," they exclaim, in their arrogant and emphatic language, "the God whom we adore is not a God of darkness but of light; and whatever emanates from Him ought to be clear, luminous, and intelligible."† But, O most irrational of men! from whom do nature, truth, and science emanate except from this self-same God? How, then, does it happen that nature, the sciences, that every grand and sublime truth are all, according to your own admission, surrounded by shadows which your intellect cannot penetrate? Is God a God of darkness because He does not give us lights equal to His own? and because, when He reveals to us what is useful for us to learn, He does not lift up every veil which conceals the secrets of His profound wisdom, in order to gratify our pride? "No, no," they continue with renewed arrogance, "God, all Divine as He is, cannot impose upon us the obligation of believing what we cannot comprehend. This would be to exact the sacrifice of our reason, which would be absurd and impossible." Strange infatuation! Man will believe, upon the testimony of other men, many things which he cannot comprehend; and he can believe nothing upon the testimony of God but what is evidently proved to him. Oh, philosophers, hear me! You require that your children should disbelieve yourselves when you teach them mysteries which are intelligible to you but incomprehensible to them, because you say the growing reason of the child ought to yield to the stronger and maturer reason of the perfect man. Nothing can be more reasonable. You require that the unlettered man should believe upon the authority of the learned, contrary to the testimony of all his senses, and a sort of physical experience, that the earth, which to him seems motionless, never ceases to turn upon its axis, and carries himself along with it in a motion of incredible ra

* "We weigh matter; we measure it; we decompose it; but if we endeavour to advance a single step beyond those gross and material operations, we find ourselves totally incapable, and an abyss before us. What incomprehensible things are we not obliged to admit, even in geometry! Could any one conceive, how two lines separated, and not even an inch asunder, should be always approaching each other and yet never meet."—VOLTAIRE.

† Rousseau.

pidity, which he does not perceive, and which every thing seems to him to contradict; you allow him no objection or doubt upon this subject, because you say the unenlightened reason of the illiterate man ought to bow down before the cultivated intellect of the astronomer and the geometrician; and in that I agree with you. You require that a blind man should believe all the phenomena of light, of perspective, and colour, upon the authority of those who are endowed with sight, although he can form no conception of them himself, and although they appear to his mind to be so many inconceivable paradoxes, because you say that every motive of disbelieving them, which reason could suggest to the blind man, must give way before the express and unanimous testimony of so many men who are endowed with the power of sight; and I must approve of that conclusion. But when you admit that in the cases which I have adduced, and in many others, it is unnecessary for man, notwithstanding the apparent improbabilities or impossibilities which he encounters, to submit his understanding to that of his fellow-men—when you deny that he ought to exhibit the same deference and the same docility to the sovereign and infallible intelligence of the Deity—when you refuse to admit that in science and enlightenment that Infinite Being has a far greater superiority over any mortal, even the most enlightened, than the full grown man possesses over the child, or the man who sees over the blind man, or the philosopher over the ignorant man—I must confess that your blindness and your inconsistency seem to me the greatest of all mysteries; and if this be what you dignify with the appellation of philosophy and wisdom, it is what I term not only inexcusable audacity and impiety, but inexplicable stupidity and folly. Common sense must persuade us that when the authority of God is adduced in support of any doctrine, the only question to be investigated is, to determine whether it be true that God has spoken: for if the revelation comes from Him, whatever may be the difficulties or obscurities which it may present to us, all our arguments to the contrary are as senseless as the arguments of a blind man against colours, or those of a deaf man against sound and speech. Now, that God has spoken in the Christian revelation is a fact which has been proved to a demonstration in the face of the whole world for nearly two thousand years. The proofs themselves are sensible and striking facts. Prophecies and their fulfilment are facts; miracles are facts; the testimony of so many thousands of martyrs are facts; the conversion of the whole civilized world is a fact, and one of the most illustrious

ever heard of: the preservation of the Church during the last eighteen hundred years, in the midst of the ever-repeated but ineffectual assaults of hell against her, is a visible and permanent fact of which three-score generations and all the nations of the earth are witnesses. Are these facts true or false, are they certain or doubtful? That is the whole question. If they are beyond all dispute, the controversy is decided; Christianity is a Divine religion and its incomprehensible mysteries are the adorable secrets of an Infinite Wisdom, in whose august presence our false reason should fall prostrate and be humbled. If they are false, let the infidel prove them to be so; but that is what he will never venture to attempt. The evidence which surrounds them alarms him. As he is compelled to avoid a discussion which is enlightened by so much clearness, and which is not beyond the capacity of any one, he rushes into the boundless and obscure field of doctrine, to contend in darkness and to involve himself in endless reasonings regarding the probability or possibility of matters which he cannot understand. Hence it is—and you must perceive it to be one of the most extraordinary contradictions to which the insanity of the present age has given birth—that whilst men applaud themselves for having abandoned the system of argument and theory, in the study of the physical sciences, as subject to illusion and error, and draw their conclusions from actual observations and positive facts alone—whilst scientific inquirers no longer concern themselves in explaining the causes of certain phenomena, but in testing the results of their experiments—whilst they generally observe at the sight of facts which astonish the observers—"How it occurs cannot be conceived; but it is the fact"—a course the very opposite is pursued in reference to religion—the most exalted and the most mysterious of all sciences; facts are disregarded, although they are the only accessible and palpable part of it, that men may lose their way in the mazes of absurd speculations and unmeaning evasions respecting mysteries which are incomprehensible by their very nature; and after God has spoken, the insolent remark put forward is, "That is not true, for it exceeds my comprehension."*

II. But our audacious adversaries will ask—"What is the utility of articles of faith if they are not intended to be under-

* "With regard to revelation, if I were better able to reason or better instructed, I may, perhaps, be convinced of its truth; but although I see proofs in favour of it which I am unable to refute, I also see objections against it which I cannot resolve. On that point I remain in respectful doubt."—ROUSSEAU.

stood? Is it consistent with the dignity of God to propose problems and enigmas to us as articles of belief?" Senseless men! must I again remind you how nature, this great work of God which you study so constantly, furnishes you with so many enigmas and problems which you cannot resolve? Will you reject your imperfect knowledge of these as useless, because you are not able to examine and investigate them all to your satisfaction? Would you desire that the Creator had concealed the whole of this splendid spectacle of the universe from your view, because there are certain portions of it which you are incapable of exploring, and scarcely any which you are competent to explain? And if there be another, and an invisible world, in which He displays other works more wondrous still, in which He dwells in glory, and shows Himself without a veil to His elect—if we are formed for this better world—if we are destined to see and to possess God there, and to enjoy eternal delights in His bosom—must we not be apprized of our sublime destiny in order to induce us the more earnestly to attain it? Must we not receive, at least, some faint notion of that country to which we ought to look forward—of that never-ending happiness which it is our duty to merit—of that God to whom we shall be united by love for all eternity? Now, what can we learn respecting those sublime subjects, which are so foreign to our senses, and elevated so far above our natural conceptions, that must not be more or less obscure and mysterious to our minds in our present state of ignorance and darkness? To wish that everything which relates to the future life, and to the Divinity, should either be altogether concealed from us here below, or made manifest to our view, without being, in the least, obscured, is to wish that the providence of God should overturn all its plans, and that, in the most important particular, it should deviate from the unvarying course which it pursues in all its operations. For, how can we fail to perceive that all created intelligences, at the period of their formation, receive the beginnings, and, as it were, the first principles of faculties which are destined to receive a further development in the time to come, so that by an insensible transition, and a gradual advancement from the original imperfect and misshapen condition in which they had been formed, they at length arrive at that final state of maturity and perfection for which each of them has been designed? Thus, long before the age of reason, the child is enlightened by a feeble intellectual light which, as it were, begins to dawn; his ideas, which had been confused and darkened before, grow more distinct by degrees; he continues

to speak a language which he does not comprehend, during the long period which intervenes, before he attaches a clear and distinct meaning to the words which he pronounces; and is is only after a protracted study of principles which are uninteresting, and almost unintelligible, that he at length acquires the portion of knowledge of which the human intellect is susceptible here below. This is what daily experience teaches us. Let us now extend our views and elevate our thoughts to loftier considerations. As a man is an immortal being whose existence begins in time, and must last throughout eternity, we may truly say that his present life is only a sort of childhood, and that eternity is his mature age. As he is, therefore, only a child in this world, he is only, as it were, the first rude outline of what he is destined to become hereafter. He has not yet a perfect comprehension of the things of God, but merely the first imperfect conceptions, which shall receive their development in a future state. He learns on earth to lisp the language of the blessed and the Angels, which he is destined to speak in heaven for all eternity. He studies the yet obscure elements of a divine science which he will not be able to comprehend to its full extent, until he shall have attained the plenitude of the perfect man in Jesus Christ.* All this doctrine is that of the great Apostle. Hear what he says himself—"*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.*†" But when the period of mature age shall arrive, all that appertained to childhood will disappear. *When I became a man, I put away the things of a child.*‡ What we see at present—*as through a glass in a dark manner,*§ we shall then see *face to face.*‖ What we know at present only obscurely, and in part, we shall then know as perfectly as we are known to ourselves.¶ What, then, is the use of mysteries? You perceive it already, my dear brethren. They form a necessary degree in the great and sublime development of man, who grows up, here below, for eternity, and prepares himself, amidst the shadows of this earthly city, for the lights and glory of his immortal country. What is the use of mysteries? They are the link which binds earth to heaven by a glorious identity of sentiments, thoughts, and language. What the blessed see we believe—what they possess we hope hope for—what they love and adore is also the object of our adoration and love. Our canticles are but a faint echo of theirs. They return thanks in perpetual transports of bliss for those ineffable blessings which they enjoy; we sigh with the

* *Ephes.* iv. 13. † 1 *Cor.* xiii. 11. ‡ *Ibid.*
§ 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12. ‖ *Ibid.* ¶ *Ibid.*

ardour of unabated desire for the enjoyment of the same blessings which mysteries point out to us through a veil, and which they promised as the certain reward of our faith. To dispute with God His right to reveal such mysteries to man, and to require of us to believe them, is to dispute with the Eternal Intelligence the right of subjecting created intelligences which emanate from it; it is to dispute with infallible truth the right of being believed; it is to dispute with infinite goodness the right of bestowing upon us the greatest favours which it is possible for us to receive.

It is, therefore, useless for the infidel to assert either that no truths which are incomprehensible to man exist; or that God cannot oblige man to believe those truths which are above his comprehension. These two points have been now fully established. What, then, will he assert? No other alternative remains for him except to carry impiety to its excess, and to exclaim, in the intoxication of his pride, that he rejects these Divine doctrines, not precisely because they are incomprehensible, but because they are absurd—not because they are above reason, but because they are contrary to its clearest lights. Despite the horror which such blasphemies must excite within our hearts, we shall discuss this point also, and prove that this last objection is not only the most revolting, but also the most untenable of any.

III. One of the most notorious and most violent enemies of Christianity—the philosopher of Geneva to whom we have already referred—admits that "Revelation has proofs in its support which he is unable to overcome; that the Gospel could not be the production of men; that it is not in such a manner inventions are contrived; and that this book possesses characters of truth so perfectly inimitable that the inventor of it would be a more astonishing personage than the hero." Now, when the absurdities and contradictions, which men imagine they find in it, are adduced, in order to reject a revelation founded upon such proof, and a book distinguished by such characters, they should not be merely apparent absurdities and contradictions, but—to use the expression of the same writer—"clear and palpable absurdities; evident falsehoods." As far as regards merely apparent contradictions, they prove nothing, they are often met with in matters which it is impossible to know and understand thoroughly; and it sometimes happens that such contradictions, without being real, seem, nevertheless, to be very striking, and they often give rise to unanswerable objections even against the most undoubted truths. A single example will illustrate this, my brethren. Take a man who

has been blind from his birth -who has never heard of the effect produced by the reflection of objects in a looking-glass. Place him before a glass, and say to him—"Here is your image and mine; they are perfect images; they are, as it were, living ones; they not only delineate the size, the features, and the whole person of every one of us with the minutest accuracy, but they move, advance, retire, and perform the same movements as we ourselves do." He will ask you to let him touch these images. When you lay his hands upon the glass, he will pass them over its entire surface, and measure all its dimensions exactly, and his answer will be—"You deceive me. There is no sign here of what you assert; and all your assertions are so many manifest contradictions. I have felt statues which have been shaped by statuaries, and I could discover all the forms of the human body in them; I therefore conclude that they were faithful representations. But when you present a level and uniform substance to my inspection—when this substance does not contain the least inequality, or any shape which bears the most distant resemblance to that of our bodies, and you say to me, 'This is your image and mine'—when you speak to me of figures, which move here, where I perceive everything perfectly motionless—figures which you say advance and then retire to a distance, in this place where there can be no distance, since everything is near and under my hand, or no room for retiring, since it altogether consists in a simple surface without depth or solidity—when, to crown the impossibility, you, moreover, state that not only the images of each of us, but also those of every object which surrounds us, and of the entire apartment in which we are, together with its height and its other dimensions to their full extent, may all be seen within the narrow limits of this glass—you must allow me to regard all these assertions as evident absurdities which cannot be received until it becomes true to say that the part is greater than the whole; that surface and solidity are precisely identical; that rest and motion remain together equally at rest; that, in one word, all which is most opposite and contradictory may be reconciled and combined in the same object." Such will be the objection of the blind man; and I maintain that it is unanswerable, because I defy you to explain it in a manner which is intelligible to him, or to give him any other answer except that all these contradictions which are so striking in his eyes and which he asserts to be palpable—because he imagines that he touches them with his finger—are, nevertheless, merely apparent, and that he would soon agree with you in regarding them as chimerical, if he could but conceive a notion of the nature of these images of

which there is question—images which you will assure him are real without being solid—which possess extension without occupying space—whose existence, motion, dimensions, and shape are manifest to the eye, but not to the touch, and sensible to the sight, although they are imperceptible to every other sense. What will all this explanation be to the blind man, except a mysterious and enigmatical language which will add new difficulties to those which already confound him, and make what he already refused to believe, doubly incredible to him? Thus, the loss of an organ converts undoubted facts into absurdities in his estimation. He rejects the most certain truths as falsehoods and contradictions, because he allows himself to judge with only the imperfect knowledge with which he is endowed. But, my brethren, are we not all blind with regard to those matters which are above our comprehension? And if we follow the dictates of our own judgment upon those subjects which our minds cannot grasp, will we not easily consider that to be false and contradictory which is, in reality, incomprehensible and true?

"No," the infidel will reply; "I am guilty of no such folly. I call a proposition absurd when its terms—when they are well known, and evidently incompatible—destroy each other, not in appearance, out in reality; and such are the absurdities which I find in the mysteries of revealed religion." That is to say, unbeliever! you reproach Christianity, not with specious and plausible errors, which may sometimes deceive well-judging and enlightened minds, but with those palpable and gross contradictions which the most simple common sense discovers and rejects at the first glance, and which can therefore be admitted by the ignorant and unthinking alone. Now, I entreat you to consider the consequences which follow from an assertion. If it be true, the entire civilized world has been, for the last eighteen hundred years, in a state of actual and downright insanity, receiving manifest absurdities and extravagancies as if they were divine truths. If it be true, all those men who have been celebrated for their talents and acquirements, as well as for their virtues, who, after mature deliberation, have abandoned paganism in order to embrace the sacred doctrine of Jesus Christ, at the sacrifice of all they possessed—all those who sealed the doctrine with their blood, such as Justin, Cyprian, and Ireneus—all those great writers who, from the foundation of the Church, even down to our own days, have defended the mysteries of faith in these multitudes of immortal works, whose eloquence, depth, powerful argument, and sublime philosophy we so earnestly admire—the Tertul-

lians, the Augustines, the Basils, and, still more recently, the Bossuets and the Fenelons, and many others whom I could mention—all these, with all the generations who have applauded them, have been mere ignorant and senseless men, who were incapable of perceiving those evident contradictions and impossibilities which strike the most vulgar minds, even at the first glance! Nor can it be said that they were surprised, and that the question had not been sufficiently canvassed and debated: for it has been investigated at first, during three hundred years, before the face of the whole universe, between the Christians on one side and the synagogue, the philosophers of the academy and the portico, the priests and the worshippers of false gods, supported by all the power of the rulers of this world, by all the power of human passion, and all the prejudices of the people, on the other—and subsequently throughout the whole course of ages, it has been discussed between the Catholic Church and those multitudes of conflicting heresies which have assailed every mystery, one after the other—who have exhausted every one of those specious and subtle arguments which are exhibited to us at the present day as so original and conclusive against these mysteries; and so great has been the inconceivable blindness of the world, that in the midst of this long and desperate struggle, doctrines which, according to them, were evidently absurd, have gained the victory, in defiance of all the opposition of such formidable adversaries; palpable contradictions have triumphed over the Cæsars and their executioners, over prejudice and passion, over the synagogue and idolatry, over sectaries of every kind, and the impious philosophers of every age.

This astonishing triumph continues even to the present day. We continue to believe and to reverence all those mysteries which our atheists and deists so boldly denounce as nonsensical and foolish; we cherish them as our fathers have done; and, like them, we, too, are ready to confess them at the peril of our lives. All the true philosophers, the most able writers, the sincere worshippers of the Deity, all the men whose morals are most above reproach, who are most devoted to the study of religion and the search after truth, which the present age has produced, regard our most incomprehensible doctrines as Divine secrets which surpass the understanding of man, and they can see nothing in them which is contrary to reason. This does not arise from any ignorance on their part of the well-known objections and demonstrations of our infidel thinkers. But what do they find under a dazzling exhibition of words except gross sophisms and contemptible equivocations

and a childish play upon words? Of this we can furnish one example out of many, in an expression which is made use of by these audacious libellers of Christianity, who blaspheme the leading article of our faith, and are guilty of the daring sacrilege of travestying the most august mystery—the mystery of a God in three persons—when they accuse us of teaching, that one is three, and that three are only one. There is certainly a very remarkable absurdity in the words; but they are not our words, but theirs; and the absurdity exclusively belongs to the authors of the blasphemy. We shall explain this equivocation in a few words; and as this miserable pun, or whatever figure of speech it may be—for what name can be found for it?—is put forward as an invincible argument—as it is ever ready upon the lips of all the enemies of religion—as it is found in all their books, from the portly volumes which have been written for the philosophers of the sect to the portable manuals of infidelity, composed by philosophers for the use of the people—we shall prove that nothing can be more futile—that nothing can better prove their utter inability to discover real contradictions in our doctrines.

If we asserted that there was only one nature in God, and that at the same time He had three natures, or that He had three persons, and again that He had only one, we would really fall into the contradiction with which they upbraid us. But that there should be a unity of nature and a trinity of persons in God, is, in truth, a profound mystery; but it is a mystery in which we defy all the argumentation of our most subtle adversaries to show the least contradiction, because the idea of three distinct persons by no means excludes the idea of an indivisible nature. It must, therefore, be admitted, that those paltry jests respecting objects which are so venerable and so highly elevated above all human conceptions, those unbecoming distortions of the language of faith and piety by which they devote all that so many generations have adored to the derision of the vulgar, are means as vile as they are odious, as foolish as they are scandalous and wicked. When they are overcome in this particular, and obliged to abandon with discredit to themselves the reproach of contradiction which is so manifestly unfounded, will they take refuge again in that of the incomprehensible character of the mysteries of our faith? Will they return to those unceasing exclamations with which they have already exhausted our patience? "What obscurity! what enigmas!" they exclaim. "What is this one and indivisible nature with its trinity of persons? What can be more inexplicable than this trinity in this unity? If it be inexplicable,

how does that affect its truth? When you must admit that almost everything in this world is inexplicable to you—that you are inexplicable to yourself—why should not God be also inexplicable to a comprehension which is so limited as yours? Moreover, you cannot admit that three persons can exist in a single nature; but will you more readily admit that there are two distinct natures in a single person? Does one appear to you more probable than the other? You say it does not. Tell me, then, how many natures are there in you? If you are not a materialist - if you are not altogether absurd —you will have no hesitation in answering that you have two natures —a spiritual nature, which is your soul; and a material nature, which is your body. But do these two natures make you two persons, or only one? Your reply is, "They make me only one. I am one, and am not two; I am myself, and I cannot separate or divide myself." This is true; but how can this unity of person subsist in a two-fold nature? How can your soul and your body, which are two, make only a single individual —a single "ME?" and how can you, who are but one, be a soul and body at the same time—that is to say, how can you be two in nature? You must admit that this is a mystery which, although it cannot be compared to the former—because the creature is infinitely inferior to the Creator —would, nevertheless, be sufficient to employ all your reflections throughout the whole course of your life, and, at the end, it would not be in your power to explain or comprehend it.

Great God! these are the men who dare to enter into a controversy with Thee, who establish themselves as the judges of what Thou teachest, and who are not afraid to reject the words of eternal truth, as if they were nothing more than absurd conceits. They have examined or investigated nothing? they have not even bestowed sufficient reflection upon the very objects which surround them which are not beyond their capacity—to comprehend that everything in Thy works is a mystery; and they arrogantly assert Thou hast no right to inculcate mysteries upon their minds, or that they are under no obligation to believe Thy words. They cannot reconcile the apparent contradictions which they meet with in the whole force of nature—in every science—in themselves; and they invent senseless contradictions, that they may be enabled to blaspheme Thy sacred law. They treat the doctrines of religion as absurdities, and they invent systems of irreligion in which everything bears the stamp of absurdity impressed upon it They do not believe in Thy existence, O Infinite Spirit! O uncreated wisdom! O fountain of existence, life, thought,

order, truth, and justice! But they attribute eternity to this perishable world, intelligence to matter, order to chance, wisdom to blind fatality, and virtue to a stupid instinct. . . .

SERMON ON JESUS CHRIST CONSIDERED AS THE PRINCIPLE OF RUIN AND RESURRECTION.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND OF THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE.

"He is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many."—*Luke* ii. 34.

What an amazing spectacle, my brethren, is that which is exhibited in the mystery of this day! An Infant is brought into the temple. There is nothing in His outward appearance to distinguish Him from ordinary children. He exhibits no indication of strength or power; He does not yet even begin to lisp in infant accents; tears are His only language. He displays no mark of wealth or greatness. A poor and humble mother who bears Him in her arms, and nourishes Him with her milk, and a poor artisan who accompanies Him and acts as a father towards Him, are the only retinue or pomp by which He is surrounded. The offering of the poor—two pigeons or turtle doves—are the only oblation which those who present Him to the Lord are able to afford. The offering of a lamb would be far beyond their means. Who could refrain from believing that He is some obscure infant whose life would be attended with as little splendour as His birth, and would never exert the slightest influence upon the destinies of mankind.

In the meantime a holy sage who was anxiously expecting the consolation of Israel, and whom the Lord had filled with His light, enters the temple, whither he had been led by Divine Inspiration. No sooner does he behold this infant, who was so feeble in appearance, than he penetrates by faith through those veils behind which the annihilated majesty of God lay concealed, and he recognises and adores the Son of the Eternal in the person of the Son of a virgin. Under the influence of a love stronger than reverence, he takes this infant in his arms, and exclaims in the excess of his joy, that all he desires is to die because his eyes have beheld Him who was destined to be the glory of His people, the light of nations, the salvation of the world. Then, beholding at one view all

the effects which the coming of the Redeemer should produce upon earth—all the prodigies which His justice and His mercy would effect throughout the course of ages—he comprises them all in two words, and addresses Mary in that prophetic declaration whose meaning is so momentous—*Positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum.*

This is one of these illustrious predictions contained in the gospel, which would be sufficient itself to demonstrate the Divinity of our holy religion, even if other proofs were wanting. By what other light, I ask, except the light of God Himself, could the aged Simeon perceive that this infant, still silent and covered with swaddling clothes, whom he holds in his arms, would be the supreme Master and the only Judge of the human race; that upon Him alone should depend the loss or the salvation, the elevation and the downfall of men and nations: that upon Him alone must depend the destinies of the universe, for the time to come; for all this is comprised in that brief but profound expression *Positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem.*

Oh! my brethren, allow me to show you, upon this day, the literal fulfilment of that great prophecy in every part of the earth, and throughout every generation, from the hour at which it was spoken, even to our own days—to exhibit to your view this magnificent picture of Jesus Christ, from the summit of His invisible throne, exercising an undivided sovereignty over this world, which has been the conquest of His blood—disposing of sceptres and crowns with absolute authority—exalting or depressing sovereigns, dynasties, and empires, according to the dictates of His will—choosing and rejecting whomsoever He pleases—overturning with His almighty hand whatever opposes His designs—supporting His immortal work against all the efforts of hell—proving, in a word, that it belongs to Him alone to root out or to plant, to build up or to destroy, to give life or death, as each seems good to His Divine will. *Positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem.*

Generally speaking, we regard Jesus Christ as possessing merely that spiritual power which He exercises invisibly upon the heart, and by which He works the secret miracles of His grace; we reflect but little upon that other no less real authority which He has received in His capacity of Supreme Master and ruler over kings and people—an authority which He exercises with an irresistible influence over human societies, and the members who compose them, and by means of which, He makes all things infallibly co-operate to His own sublime

end, through storms, through revolutions, through all those mighty commotions which are excited by the passions of men —an authority, whose effects, when they are no longer inferior and secret, but sensible and, in some measure palpable, is therefore the better adapted to make a salutary and profound impression upon worldly minds, if they be brought to reflect upon them. It is to the principal characters of this visible reign, as it were, of the Son of God, as I find them delineated in the history of the last eighteen hundred years, and even in the events which are occurring before our eyes, that I shall direct your attention. You will, no doubt, be attracted by this picture, in which the imagination will have no share, and which will unfold nothing to your view, except undeniable facts and certain results. Your blindness must be excessive, indeed, if you did not find this to contain what will confirm your faith and confound your unbelief; for it will appear manifest, from a sort of historical demonstration, that the fate of those who obstinately resist Jesus Christ is to perish; whilst victory is the lot of all who fight beneath His standard; and that, consequently, He must be the true master of the world. Such is the object of this discourse. First, the ruin of those nations, sovereigns, individuals, and societies, who have declared themselves enemies to the Christian religion. *Positus est in ruinam.* Secondly, the triumph of those societies, princes, and individuals who continue faithfully attached to the faith of our Saviour, and put their whole trust in Him. *Positus in resurrectionem.* It is thus, my brethren, I shall develop for your edification, and for the glory of the truth, these mysterious and significant expressions of the holy sage. *Positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum.*

O thou to whom those words are addressed, and who alone wert able to penetrate their depth—glorious Virgin whom we honour and invoke upon this festival, obtain for me the grace of celebrating worthily the omnipotence and the victories of that adorable Son whom thou didst present like a lamb in the temple upon this anniversary, that I may represent Him as the Lamb that bears sway over this earth, who taketh possession of His empire, and who, by offering Himself in sacrifice, ought to subjugate all things and render them obedient to His will. *Ave Maria, &c.*

1.—It was more than a thousand years before the birth of our Saviour, and the oracle of Simeon, when David beheld in spirit the Eternal God conferring royalty upon His Christ, establishing His throne upon Mount Sion, and addressing Him in these words: *Thou art My Son: this day I have begotten*

*Thee. Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the gentiles for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel. And now, O ye kings, serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish when His wrath shall be kindled.** Let us contemplate the fulfilment of that momentous prophecy.

The first people who opposed the reign of Jesus Christ was the Jewish people. Not content with disowning Him whom God had sent, they moreover persecuted Him and put Him to death. Accordingly they were the first whose downfall attested the avenging power of the Divine King. But how great a ruin has befallen them! Has there ever been a downfall so terrible, or one that so visibly bore the impress of the vengeance of Heaven? Need I allude to the horrors of that ever memorable siege in which, by an unexampled complication of disasters—while famine, contagion, intestine war, and war from without, combined their ravages, the citizens fell upon each other with more fury than the enemy, and even mothers—be astonished, O ye heavens!—devoured the fruit of their own wombs? Within the space of a few months, eleven hundred thousand souls perished. Need I remind you of the total destruction of the stately and immense city of Jerusalem, where, in fulfilment of the prediction of our Saviour, one stone was not left upon another, and that of the temple, the admiration of the world, which the conqueror himself was unable to defend against the flames, which was reduced to ashes, notwithstanding all his efforts to save it, and no earthly power has ever afterwards been able to rebuild it? Above all, need I speak of this astonishing dispersion which has been so solemnly predicted by the ancient prophets and by Jesus Christ Himself, and which prediction has been so rigorously fulfilled, during eighteen hundred years, and continues so striking and visible, even at the present day, from the remains of this unfortunate people which still remain scattered throughout the earth—a dispersion which, as it were, holds up to the view of the whole earth the mutilated and ever living body of this reprobate nation, whose limbs, scattered through every place, are always exhibiting to every beholder the most remarkable monument of the Divine vengeance, and the dreadful punishment of deicide.

At the sight of this people scattered through so many nations, and unable to establish themselves permanently any where—

* *Ps.* ii. 8-12.

living in the midst of strangers, and never associating with them—hated and persecuted by all, and yet never destroyed—more strongly attached than any other to their religion and its doctrines, and yet the only one that has neither temple, nor altar, nor priest, nor sacrifice, nor public worship—at the sight of such a strange phenomenon, who could refrain from inquiring what is this race of extraordinary men, marked by such distinctive characters, which seems to be intercepted from all intercourse with the rest of mankind? Would not an answer to such a question be, that they are the ancient and celebrated race of Abraham, who were chosen of God, and set apart by God Himself, to be a depository of the sacred oracles, and of the promises which related to the Messiah, but who instead of receiving with reverence and love that Messiah whom they so ardently desired, loaded Him with insult and calumny, and persecuted Him even to the death of the cross—who were not afraid to ask that His blood should be upon themselves and upon their children—who, ever since that fatal period, bear the oppressive weight of a dreadful anathema, and wander about like Cain—fugitives and vagabonds upon the earth—but infinitely more criminal, and bearing the stain of a blood far purer than that of Abel? Thus is the position of this nation explained, and thus has it been foretold, in those very books which they revere as divine, and which they still preserve with so much care even in their calamity and degradation. Receive these books from their hands, and you will read in their Prophet Daniel, that after four hundred and ninety years shall have elapsed—for the period is pointed out in the most precise manner—Christ shall be slain; that the people who were the authors of that crime shall be rejected; that the city, and the temple, and the sanctuary shall be destroyed; that the victims and the sacrifices should cease; and that then would commence the desolation which was destined to last to the consummation and the end of all things.* Behold in the first place, the ruin of the rebellious and obstinate Jews. *Positus est hic in ruinam.*

Next to the Jewish nation, Pagan Rome becomes the most implacable enemy of the Christian name. During three hundred years her employers and magistrates made the whole world overflow with the blood of confessors and martyrs. Rome was destined to be the second victim immolated to the God of the Gospel. This proud city had already reached the highest pinnacle of splendour and power—she had styled herself

* *Daniel* ix. 27.

the mistress of the world, and the eternal city—when the Apostle St. John saw and foretold her humiliation and her fall three centuries before it came. He pointed out the several degree of her decline, and the different scourges which prepared her for the last catastrophe, in figurative and prophetic but clear and intelligible language. He described the future conquerors of a people who so often styled themselves invincible; he even went so far as to reckon the number of the barbarous kings and nations who afterwards divided the kingdom between them: he delineated their character, and pointed out the route which they were destined to pursue; he represented them as allies at first, and enemies afterwards—selling their services for a time, and then falling upon those whom they had served with their arms, to destroy them as their prey—burning the stately palaces of Rome, pillaging its treasures, and filling it with ruin and slaughter. From his description we imagine that we behold the Goths, the Huns, the Herules, and the rest of those ferocious conquerors, as they actually appeared so long after he wrote; we recognise their policy and their violence; we discern the rage of an Alaric or a Totila who brought the ruin of ancient Rome to its final consummation; and lest the cause of such an awful chastisement should remain unknown, the Apostle who foretold it adds that such will be the treatment of *the great city which hath dominion over the kings of the earth*,* which he still more clearly points out as the city built upon seven hills;† and the reason which he assigns was, because she was the *mother of the fornications and abominations of the earth*,‡ and because she was *drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*.§ Was it possible that the decree could be more formal, or that the motive of her condemnation could be more clearly specified?

Need I complete the picture by describing the fate of every one of the Roman emperors who persecuted the Christian religion? Need I remind you of the speedy and tragical end of Nero, of Domitian, of Decius, of Julian, and of others who resembled them? Need I describe this terrible Galerius Maximin—the inventor of so many tortures, and the executioner rather than the tyrant of the Christians—suddenly struck with a dreadful malady, devoured alive by the worms which issued from his entrails, striving in vain, like Antiochus, to disarm the wrath of Heaven by tardy edicts in favour of the religion which he had proscribed, and expiring in convulsions

* *Apoc.* xvii. 18. † *Ibid.* 9. ‡ *Ibid.* 5. § *Ibid.* 6.

of the most agonizing despair; or this Maximin Daia, a still more atrocious and impious wretch, who, after having been glutted with the blood of the faithful, turned all his fury against himself at last, and endeavoured to destroy himself by poison; but deceived by the tedious operation of a venomous drug, introduced into his veins, he fell into a ferocious madness, and suffered intolerable pains; he experienced torments like those of hell, from the fire which raged within him; and fancied that he saw Jesus Christ armed with thunder, coming to avenge his murdered servants; and, while expiring, he filled his palace with his screams and pitiful lamentations? But I cannot detail them all; and what I have already said is sufficient. Behold, then, in the second place, the ruin of the idolatrous empire and of its persecuting princes. *Positus est hic in ruinam.*

Let us consider, in the third place, what has been the destiny of those nations who, after having known Jesus Christ, have abandoned His worship and lost the faith. You need but merely cast a glance over the countries of Asia which were so flourishing in ancient days—in which stood the famous cities of Ephesus, of Antioch, of Cesarea, of Nicomedia—where science, arts, literature, and the salutary doctrine of morality exercised their benign influence so long in conjunction with Christianity—where Basil, Gregory, and Chrysostom exhibited such brilliant eloquence, such mighty genius, and so many virtues. Behold, at the extremity of Europe, that city of Constantinople, which was formerly so magnificent, so polished, and so learned, founded by the first Christian emperor, and regarded as another Rome and a second Athens. Turn your eyes next towards Africa, the country of Athanasius, of Cyril, and Tertullian -where the celebrated school of Alexandria flourished, under Clement and Origen -where Cyprian and Augustine shed so great a lustre upon the cities of Carthage and Hippone. Contrast the present condition of the population of these countries with what it was in former days. Behold them surrounded by the thickest darkness of ignorance, bending beneath the yoke of a degrading despotism—degraded by gross and brutal habits, delivered up to senseless superstitions and despicable prejudices; in a word, returning to the infancy of society, after having shone with so much splendour; and you cannot fail to perceive that they have lost their glory, their intellect, their liberty, their happiness, and even their civilization, when they lost their true religion. It is a remarkable fact, that not a single country could be mentioned in which the light of the gospel became extin-

guished, that did not sink into barbarism at the same time. Thy justice, O my God, demanded that such should occur; that the apostacy of nations should suffer its own punishment as well as that of individuals; and the words which one of Thy prophets addressed to Israel, in the days of its prevarication, may, with equal propriety, be applied to every one of these apostate nations—*Know thou and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God.** Behold the ruin of these people who renounce the faith. *Positus est hic in ruinam.*

But why need we refer to other lands for such instances, when, alas! we can furnish them ourselves? O France!—for we must acknowledge it with confusion and with tears—O most Christian nation! thou hast endeavoured—yes, thou hast also endeavoured to shake off the yoke of the Lord and of His Christ, and to sever those sacred ties which bound thee, and which, thank Heaven, bind thee still, notwithstanding all thy perverseness, to the Saviour's Church. After having reached the loftiest summit of prosperity and glory, under the paternal government of a long succession of pious monarchs, thou hast at length grown weary of thy happiness and fidelity; thou hast lent too credulous an ear to false prophets and dangerous seducers; and we have seen thee for a time exhibiting to the world the melancholy spectacle of a society without a religion and without a God! And what has been the consequence? Oh! let it never be forgotten—let fathers never cease from teaching it to their children—let every page of our history reiterate the fact—that every sort of infliction has visited us along with infidelity. Shall I, my brethren, at present enter into detail of those calamities which are so memorable, and even still so fresh within your recollection—social order overturned to its very foundation—rebellion, anarchy, and the most sanguinary despotism, alternately subjecting us to all their horrors—revolutions succeeding revolutions with most fearful rapidity—the most magnificent, the most useful institutions, which were the work of ages, overturned in a single day—our precious monuments, our stately edifices falling on every side—tombs rent asunder, and the ashes scattered to the winds—our country laid waste by her own offspring, as she had been by the soldiers of Alaric or Attila—a hideous corruption of public morality giving birth to execrable and monstrous debauchery—parricide, and crimes almost unprecedented, becoming of frequent and daily occurrence—public and legalized assassination constituting the chief

* *Jeremias* ii. 11.

employment and almost the only concern of the heads of the state—integrity and honour, every virtue and every talent, as well as birth and fortune, considered sufficient grounds for proscription—the whole extent of France converted into an immense scaffold upon which blood never ceased to flow—new means of extermination speedily invented, and all the elements summoned to the aid of the murderers and executioners, whose number had become insufficient for so much slaughter—public and private education interrupted—the arts of peace abandoned, science doomed to destruction—industry consigned to neglect; the lands left uncultivated—the whole of our youth hurried to the camp—innumerable armies rushing like a desolating torrent throughout Europe—this most enlightened and polished nation become a by-word among other countries, by its madness, and the object of their aversion and alarm by its excess. I shall not pursue the description any further. We had but another step to make in order to be erased from the number of civilized nations, and to undergo the anathema of the universe. But, notwithstanding all our excesses, Thou hast been pleased to spare us, O Lord! Our wounds, indeed, must continue to bleed for centuries to come; but we have not altogether perished, and we must rise again from our ashes, because Thou hast remembered St. Louis as of old, Thou didst remember Thy holy King David—because we were not all culpable—because the greater number erred more from seduction than from perverseness; and with the assistance of Thy mercy, it is yet in our power to return to life, if we only learn to abjure our errors, to detest those crimes with the infamy of which we have been branded by our tyrants for a time, and to return with sincerity to the faith of our fathers.

But, O great God, how implacable and how awful has been Thy wrath against the authors of this impious revolt—against those who overturned Thy temples, slaughtered Thy ministers, imbrued their hands in the blood of Thy Christian king, and vainly strove to plunge the world into a second chaos, in order to abolish the memory of Thy Christ. Oh! my brethren, what a malediction has crushed them! Remember the period when they tore and destroyed each other, like ferocious beasts rushing into the arena—when by the rapid shiftings of a scene which often changed, but which, in every vicissitude, was defiled by bloodshed, the murderers became victims in their turn; when the different governments, which they vainly strove to establish, rolled and broke against each other like the waves of an angry ocean, and were swallowed up at last in the same abyss with those who framed them. Remember the catastro-

phes by which the greater number of these men have put an end to their days; and now contemplate the lot of those who survived them. Behold them overwhelmed with disgrace and tortured by remorse; not daring, even after the most solemn promulgation of pardon, to believe that they were forgiven—incapable of enjoying their immense wealth in peace, notwithstanding the promises and the security which had been vouchsafed to them—impelled by a spirit of giddiness to frame new plots, and to fill up the measure of their iniquity—pursued at last by public vengeance, or rather by Divine justice, to the very arms of royal mercy—and torn away from this last refuge to be for ever rejected from the bosom of their country, and compelled to seek some spot in a distant land where they may be suffered to expire. Behold the ruin of the authors of sacrilegious revolutions! *Positus est hic in ruinam.*

But these great criminals were only the disciples of infidelity. Its teachers were these celebrated writers of the last century who, by their writings, so profusely sowed the fruitful seeds of every error and of every crime. And have they escaped with impunity? No, my brethren, I shall direct your attention to the chastisement and the ruin of these men also.

First, the ruin of their intellect and reason. Inflated with their imaginary wisdom, they endeavoured to bring the wisdom of God Himself in subjection to it; and in consequence they became destitute of all wisdom and enlightenment. Proud as the senseless architects of Babel they undertook to build a tower in opposition to Heaven; and, punished like them by the confusion of tongues, they became unable to understand each other. They produced nothing except incoherent reveries, gross contradictions, and absurd systems. So great did the disorder of their intellects become, that after having deified their reason, they became the most violent detractors of reason, even to the extent of denying its existence and of maintaining that man differs from the brute in his organs alone, and that thought is nothing more than the degradation of instinct. They reprobated science, the cultivation of the intellect and social life, as abuses; they extolled the savage state; and they thought that man's true destiny was to live in the forests, without laws, without reflection, above all without modesty, with no care but that of seeking a prey, and of gratifying those appetites which he shares in common with the brute creation—worthy precursors of the men who, in the excess of their most abominable folly, have erected temples to reason, and adored prostitutes in them!

Secondly, the ruin of their projects and expectations. They

had flattered themselves with the hope of being able to overturn the whole empire of religion and morality from its very foundation, to exterminate all lawful power from off the face of the earth, and to establish the universal dominion of their homicidal philosophy above the ruins of thrones and altars. It is useless to deny that they wished to accomplish these pernicious designs; they proposed to themselves all the subversion which we have witnessed; and I am prepared to point out all the crimes of the revolution projected, prepared, counselled, and commended, in their writings, long before their perpetration, as the future triumphs of the sect, and the fruits which their talents were to produce. These were the fulfilment of their mighty efforts; with these was to commence the age of gold in which mankind were to be restored to what they designated the state of pure nature. But how grievously have their attempts been baffled! The hideous execution of this plan, which was worthy of hell alone, the monstrous excesses of their disciples and followers, soon filled the world with so great a horror for their doctrine, that the want of religion, of morality, and the sacred authority of kings was more strongly felt than ever; and if the advocates of these detestable theories succeeded by new intrigues to plunge us once more into revolutions, I venture to predict that their fatal success will be attended with no other result than to disabuse still more the minds which are already tired of their illusions and disorders, and to hasten the moment when these seductive names of equality and philosophical liberty, under which so many odious systems were concealed, and all their ephemeral and senseless systems, will be consigned, by the unanimous voice of all mankind, to endless reprobation.

Finally, the ruin of their reputation and honour. These men, who imagined that they could destroy the Christian religion—who even dared to call it infamous—who asserted that they were scandalized by the actions of the saints—who pretended that they could detect immoral maxims in the Gospel, and improprieties in the books of the prophets—these very men who have crowded so many abominable obscenities into their own writings that they seemed as if compelled by Providence to reveal to the world all the corruption of their own hearts, in order to disgrace and dishonour themselves. Their principal leaders were the authors of romances and poems which are the most licentious and impure that can be conceived. Some of them published "Confessions," in which they accuse themselves of baseness and infamy, upon which even human laws inflict degrading punishments; and their self-accusation was not made with the

humility of repentance, but with an impudent pride and audacious sneers against all that is virtuous and sacred. I will not refer to that contempt which they brought upon themselves by their contentions, their animosities, and their intrigues—by that torrent of abuse, and calumny, and falsehood, which flowed from their pens in such an unfailing stream—by the cowardice which many of them exhibited at the hour of death; but what can be compared to the disgrace which befel them after death? Oh! it is here that the anger of an avenging God displays its terrors. Do you think I allude to the refusal of Christian burial? No, no, my brethren; listen to what I mean. The two Coryphei of their sect—the apostle of Ferney, and the boasted citizen of Geneva—were forced to endure the indelible disgrace of a deification which had been decreed by the men who led the way to so many murders, and to such destruction amongst ourselves. They were solemnly proclaimed to be the authors and the first parents of that revolution which has threatened society with a total annihilation. This pantheon to which their bones, after being taken up from the grave, were borne with so much solemnity, and suffered to repose beside the ashes of our most detestable assassins, has become the sepulchre of their false and unmerited glory; and such honours, thus shared with such men, are the post of infamy to which their names have been attached, there to remain overwhelmed with never-ending disgrace. Behold the ruin of the founders of the anti Christian sects! *Posuisset hic in ruinam.*

Shall I conclude this portion of my discourse without making you deplore your own misfortune, and your melancholy ruin—you, my dear friend, who, although you have not been guilty of these atrocities to which I have referred, have, nevertheless, abjured in your heart the obligations which you have contracted at your baptism, and renounced the doctrine and the law of Jesus Christ by a secret apostacy! Alas! what darkness has overspread your intellect ever since you have suffered yourself to be seduced by the pernicious sophisms of infidelity! Does even one solitary truth of morality retain its evidence and its certainty for you? Are you not in an abyss of doubts and perplexities with regard to all that appertains to your dearest and most important interests? Are you even certain whether you have a spiritual soul, or whether you have not; whether your whole being must perish, or whether an awful judgment does not await you beyond the grave? Are you certain whether it is chance, or whether it is a wise, and powerful, and just God that has created the world, and still governs it? and whether this God suffers man to live according to the dictates

of his own caprice, or whether He has given him a law, the violation of which He shall punish with eternal torments? Are not all these points which are so clear and evident for those who believe the Gospel, covered with a thick darkness for you, because by losing the faith you have entered into the region of the shadow of death, where the sun of truth never sheds its light, and where you can discern no object, or find no certain course to follow? Into what snares, and over what precipices are you not therefore exposed to fall? But, moreover, my dear friend—I address myself in particular to you, young man—ever since religion and piety have begun to have no attraction for you, how awful is the corruption which has defiled your heart! how disgraceful the propensities which hold it in subjection! Do you not belong to that class of which St. Paul speaks—who, because they refused to render unto God the glory which is due to Him, have been delivered up to a reprobate sense, and disgraceful passions?* Do you not wallow like the brute, and, still worse than the brute, in the mire of the most filthy pleasures? Are not your thoughts, your senses, your desires, your whole being, constantly sunk, and, as it were, buried in this slime? Alas! perhaps your disorders have already ruined your health, shattered your fortune, brought desolation to a whole family, and blasted the fairest hopes; perhaps they have destroyed precious talents, inflicted a deadly wound upon your character, and desolated your soul with disappointment and anguish; and must you not be convinced at length that this humiliating degradation, and these cruel disgraces, are the punishment of your infidelity? Will you not make haste to return to the Lord your God whilst the bosom of mercy is still open to receive you, and whilst repentance may save you at last? Will you wait until that day of inexorable justice shall arrive, when the ruin of the sinner will be inevitable, and his misfortune without limits? *Positus est hic in ruinam.*

If I could now raise my voice so as to make it heard through out the whole world, I would address myself to nations, to sovereigns, to men of every rank, of every class, and of every country. I would say to nations—"Why do you form combinations and useless plots against the Almighty, and against his Christ? *Quare fremuerunt gentes et populi meditati sunt inania?*† What can your numbers and your combined force effect against Him who dwelleth in the highest heavens? Does He no

* *Rom.* i. 21-24.

† "Why have the gentiles raged and the people devised vain things."—*Ps.* ii. 1.

longer possess those scourges with which He chastises nations, and compels the human race to obey Him with fear and trembling? Does He no longer possess contagion, famine, war, earthquakes and storms in the treasures of His wrath? Nay, if it were His will to employ no other instrument against you, except your own rage, would they not be the most dreadful of all arms in His hands?" *Reges eos in virga ferrea, et tanquam vas figuli confringes eos.** I would say to sovereigns—"*And now, O ye kings, understand. Receive instruction, you that judge the earth. Et nunc reges, intelligite; erudimini qui judicatis terram.*† Let not those important lessons be lost upon you; let the fear of the Lord be the foundation of your policy for the time to come; and let your fidelity in His service be the model of that fidelity which you require from your own subjects. It is time to acknowledge that the religion of Jesus Christ can alone give real stability to thrones; and that the great danger of those who are entrusted with the government of others is, lest they should not fulfil the will of Him who governs the whole creation." *Servite Domino in timore, et exultate ei cum tremore.*‡ I would say to all mankind—"Endeavour to find happiness not in criminal licentiousness, but in a just submission to the Divine law." Live like docile children under the holy discipline of the best of Fathers, and the most powerful of Masters. *Apprehendite disciplinam.*§ He loves and protects those who obey Him; but His indignation crushes those who have the temerity to resist Him; and to depart from His way is to hasten to inevitable ruin. *Nequando irascatur et pereatis de via justa.*‖

Behold now, my brethren, how the Divine Infant, who has been presented in the temple upon this day, is set for the fall of many. *Positus est hic in ruinam.* It remains for us to see, moreover, how He is set for the resurrection of many others. *Positus est in resurrectionem multorum.*

II. A more consoling and a more gratifying spectacle is now exhibited to our view. Let us, my brethren, now compare the triumphs of the servants of Jesus Christ with the chastisement of His enemies, and let us contrast resurrections with ruins. The subject would be immense, but I will treat it briefly, so as not to go beyond the usual limits.

* "Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's wheel."— *Ps.* ii. 9. † *Ibid.* 10.

‡ "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling."—*Ibid.* 11.

§ "Embrace discipline."—*Ibid.* 12.

‖ "Lest the Lord be angry and you perish."—*Ibid* 12.

We had, in the first place, contemplated the fall of the perjured and deicide Jews. Along with them, the people of God, the chosen race, the promises made to the patriarchs, and the hopes of the universe, seemed to perish at the same time. But do not fear; they all receive new animation with the Christian Church. *Positus est in resurrectionem.* Oh, how glorious is that resurrection! He by whose will a few grains which are reserved each year from the harvest, and sown in the ground, produce a new harvest, sets apart twelve men out of the whole Jewish nation, sows them as a fertile seed throughout the earth, and an abundant harvest of adorers in spirit and in truth immediately springs up on every side. The new people is, in every respect, superior to the old. They succeed to all its rights; they receive all its inheritance, and they add to it other riches more precious still. They possess the reality of what was foreshadowed, and the fruit of what was promised to the latter. That nation was confined within the narrow limits of Palestine, but the others have no limits to their extension, except the limits of the world itself. One was destined to last only for a time; the other will not end until the world itself shall be no more, as the words of our Divine Master have expressly declared. *Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, and, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.** This Divine promise will not be falsified by any event whatsoever. What obstacles will not hell place in the way, what contrivances will it not adopt, to oppose the fulfilment of that promise; but they will all be unavailing; for it is written, that hell shall not prevail—although it will be allowed to excite the learned and the wise, the populace and the nobility, the executioners, the soldiers, and the Cæsars against twelve poor unarmed and unlettered fishermen who have undertaken the conquest of the universe. But although murmurs, and threats, and the rage of nations and princes assail them, these twelve men traverse their boundless course with the same rapidity as that of the sun passing through the broad expanse of the heavens. *Exultavit ut gigas ad currendam viam.*† Scarce have they gone beyond the precincts of Judea, when they reach the limits of the east and west, and extended their course even from pole to pole. *A summo cœlo egressio ejus et occursus ejus usque ad summum ejus* ‡ Their voice resounds through the universe like the

* *Matt.* xxviii. 19.

† "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way."—*Ps.* xviii. 6.

‡ "His going out is from the end of heaven, and his circuit even to the end thereof."—*Ps.* xviii. 7.

crash of thunder; shakes the empire of idolatry to its very foundations, wherever that empire had extended its dominion; lays the idols and their temples prostrate; silences the oracles, confounds the magicians, the philosophers, the priests of the false gods, and accustoms an astonished world to hear the name of the true God. *In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum.** At length they die, sealing their testimony with their blood, as Jesus Christ had promised that they should, and in compliance with His prediction, leaving behind them an invulnerable and immortal posterity. But hell is still indefatigable. During three whole centuries it combines and arms all that is powerful upon earth, in opposition to the Church; it exhausts every device of stratagem and violence to destroy her at her birth. But the vigorous tree increases in size and strength, and extends its branches and roots beneath the repeated and powerless blows of the axe, until the blunted steel is shivered to pieces against its invulnerable trunk, and persuades the world that it is time to fall prostrate and adore it. New conflicts succeed this victory. She shall never enjoy peace here below; for she received that assurance in the persons of her founders. "I send you like sheep in the midst of wolves. They will hate you and persecute you on my account. But fear not, little flock: because it hath pleased your heavenly Father to give you a kingdom." *Nolite timere, pusillus grex, quia complacuit patri vestro dare vobis regnum.*† It is her fate always to suffer, and always to triumph. Follow her through the course of ages, and you will see her always assailed by dangers, and agitated by conflicts from within and without. Heresy and schism tear her asunder, scandals leave her desolate, infidelity is unremitting in its assaults, but she is proof against every danger. She has grown old in conflicts, but nothing can alarm her. She has witnessed the fall and the destruction of every thing around her; yet she still remains firm and unshaken; and now, at the expiration of eighteen hundred years, she exhibits her venerable brow, covered with honourable wounds, but calm and unruffled, to the astonished gaze of every foe. Has she turned pale at the sight of that appalling conspiracy which has burst forth against her in our days? Has she trembled before that confederacy of poets, orators, politicians, infidel and apostate priests, powerful men, assassins, and executioners, who had sworn to destroy her? Has she lost her accustomed firmness when

* "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth."—*Rom.* x. 18.
† *Luke* xii. 32.

proscriptions, funeral piles, and scaffolds, have succeeded to sarcasms, insult, and calumny? What resistance did she offer in the midst of so many alarms? She invoked the Lord, and sung the hymn of her ancient victories. "They have often assailed me in this manner from my youth," said she: *Sæpe expugnaverunt me a juventute mea.** "But their efforts against me have been always unavailing." *Et enim non potuerunt mihi.* † "I know Him in whom I have put my confidence; I will wait without being troubled, until it shall please Him to deliver me." *Scio cui credidi.* ‡ "I cannot perish, for I am promised immortality; and when I am again released from this new danger, I shall again celebrate the mercies and the favours of that God who protects me." *Non moriar sed vivam, et narrabo opera Domini.*

Persecutors of the eighteenth century! you who are so well skilled in combining so much perfidy with so much cruelty, what advantage, I ask, have you gained over the Church? Although you boast of having brought the art of Nero and Julian to perfection, in what respect has your success exceeded theirs? Although you have endeavoured to drown her in her own blood, the admission has been extorted from you as well as from them, that to multiply her martyrs was to augment her power and glory. When you afterwards so sagaciously declared that she should be suffered to expire, you plainly saw that she still continued to live, and she is now surviving yourselves. You have plundered all her worldly wealth; but the poor whom she had supported have been the sufferers; for her own part she is as rich at the present day as she had been at the period of her earliest triumphs; and even if she possessed nothing, that Being, who provides for the birds of heaven, would not abandon His spouse. You have destroyed her magnificent establishments; but by doing so, you have only deprived the world and your country of the blessings which they enjoyed; and she will find consolation in rendering them new favours. You have plundered her of her outward ornaments and her ancient splendour; she will adorn herself still more with her virtues. You have sacrificed her Phineas and Onias; her most illustrious chiefs, and almost all the flower of the sacred tribe have fallen beneath your assaults; she weeps for them, but she will pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth new labourers into His harvest; she will ask him for pontiffs and priests, according to His own heart, and they will be given to her; and if it were necessary that they should be raised up from the

* *Ps.* cxxviii. 2. † *Ibid.* ‡ 2 *Tim.* i. 12.

dead, she will expect it from Him to whom all miracles are easy, and whose power she has often experienced. And, as we must entertain the melancholy supposition, if our crimes and our blindness made us deserve to lose the faith—an event which may God avert—if the Church of Jesus Christ were exiled from amongst us, she would abandon us with sorrow, but she would not perish. As the sun loses none of his brightness when he leaves us buried in the darkness of night, and goes to enlighten another hemisphere—thus religion would also leave us plunged in the thick darkness of our unbelief, to shed the brilliancy of her Divine light upon happier lands. The two worlds are open to receive her. Her territory is not limited to any portion of the earth. All places, as well as all times, belong to her. As she has passed from Asia and Africa into Europe, she may again cross the seas, and reach lands that are far away, there to bring forth a new people, and to present new children to the Lord. The Indies and Tartary have already heard her accents. We learn that her conquests are extending from day to day in the direction of that vast empire, situate at the extremity of the east, towards which the looks of the expiring Xavier were directed. The frozen banks of the Tanais are trodden by her apostles; the islands afar off are awaiting theirs: America sees her infant Churches flourishing; new sees have been founded in the midst of her vast territory; and even the wild Louisiana has her own bishop.*

* The following remarkable passage, from the pen of a Protestant, and one of the ablest writers of the present day, is almost identical in thought and sentiment with the observations contained in the text :—

"There is not, and there never was, on this earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church. The history of that Church joins together the two great ages of civilization. No other institution is left standing which carries the mind back to the time when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon, and when cameleopards and tigers bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. The proudest royal houses are but of yesterday when compared with the line of the supreme Pontiffs. That line we trace back, in an unbroken series, from the Pope who crowned Napoleon, in the nineteenth century, to the Pope who crowned Pepin in the eighth; and far beyond the time of Pepin the august dynasty extends, till it is lost in the twilight of fable. The republic of Venice came next in antiquity. But the republic of Venice was modern when compared with the Papacy; and the republic of Venice is gone, and the Papacy remains, not in decay, not a mere antique, but full of life and youthful vigour. The Catholic Church is still sending to the farthest ends of the world missionaries as zealous as those who landed in Kent with Augustine, and still confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila. The number of her children is greater than in any former age. Her acquisitions in the new world have more than compensated her for what she has lost in the old. Her spiritual ascendancy extends over the vast countries which lie

Yes, my brethren, the designs of heaven must be accomplished; nothing can impede their progress. If we renounce the sacred inheritance which has been transmitted to us by our pious ancestors, barbarous nations are ready to gather its fruits; our civilization will pass away to them along with our faith; our loss will be their gain, our death, alas! will be their resurrection. *Positus est hic in resurrectionem.*

But let us not dwell upon such affecting thoughts. Let us hope that Divine goodness will preserve us from such an awful calamity; and let us hasten to consider another miracle. Pagan Rome falls in punishment of its impiety; but from the midst of its ruins Christian Rome, which shall never fall, comes forth and rises in imposing majesty. There the See of Peter, the foundation of an imperishable edifice, is established. There that august series of pontiffs who have enjoyed an unbroken succession from the days of the Apostles themselves, and who, from their union with the high priests of the ancient law, form a continuous chain from the time of Aaron even to our own days. In vain would you search through the history of nations for any thing which could bear a comparison with this succession and this antiquity. O Rome! capital of the Catholic world—mother and mistress of all the Churches—city built upon a hill, and visible to the whole world—how venerable art thou in the eyes of true believers! how glorious dost thou seem when we recall the memory of the assaults which thou hast sustained, the unnumbered foes whose shocks have recoiled from thy ramparts! O Rome! how often wert thou crimsoned with the blood of thy pontiffs! how often have the prophets of heresy dared to proclaim thy downfall and to predict the period when it should occur! But, above all, with what assurance has the philosophy of the present age—the

between the plains of Missouri and Cape Horn; countries which, a century hence, may not improbably contain a population as large as that which now inhabits Europe. The members of her communion are certainly not fewer than one hundred and fifty millions, and it will not be difficult to show, that all the other Christian sects united, amount to a hundred and twenty millions. Nor do we see any sign which indicates that the term of her long dominion is approaching. She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world; and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was respected before the Saxon had set foot in Britain, before the Frank had passed the Rhine, when Grecian eloquence still flourished at Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temples of Mecca; and she may still exist in undiminished vigour, when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand upon a broken arch of London Bridge, to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

inheritor of all the hatred and all the errors of the sects which have gone before it—so lately boasted that the hour of thy dissolution had arrived! With what boisterous merriment have we not heard it celebrate the downfall of the priestly throne and power which it asserted was never more to rise! In truth, my brethren, if it were possible for this sacred power to perish at all, it would infallibly have perished then. You remember that period which is still so recent, when one man bore undivided sway over the whole continent of Europe—when his immense armies extended from the farthest limits of Spain to the Vistula, and from the Netherlands to Greece—when almost every monarch was either his ally, his tributary, or his slave. Having reached the pinnacle of pride as well as of power—elated with his numerous victories and his extensive conquests, he regarded the sacrilegious usurpation of the patrimony of St. Peter as one of his accustomed games: and he seized upon it. The vicar of Jesus Christ, surrounded in his palace by the soldiers of a tyrant, and a captive in the midst of them, feared not to launch his thunders against him, and to strike him with the force of his anathema. You know what followed. Figure to yourselves a feeble old man, torn with violence from his home and states, separated from his attendants and faithful councillors, dragged from exile to exile, and from prison to prison, overwhelmed with bad treatment and infirmity, and, in this condition, struggling alone against him whom kings and emperors could not resist with impunity. No voice was raised throughout the universe in defence of the persecuted Pontiff; the clergy were every where groaning in oppression, and dared not breathe a murmur; the sacred college was either in dispersion or in irons; the whole world lay silent in presence of its relentless persecutor. He concludes that the time was come to pull down the tiara at length; and that it was reserved for his mighty genius to accomplish that great design which so many tyrants before him had so often attempted in vain. His resolution is formed, all his plans are laid; and all human resistance is any longer unavailing. O Church of Rome! what refuge is now left thee? Even idolatry is not afraid to show itself again in the midst of thee. Dost thou not see the temple of Jupiter Stator arising once more upon the capitol, and the gods of paganism coming forth from the dust and threatening thee from the summit of their ancient habitation? Impiety has gained a victory. Who can defend thee now? Who, my brethren? He who has been set for the fall and for the resurrection. In one moment the aspect of affairs is changed. The elements are marshalled

against the haughty conqueror; he is put to flight; his armies are buried beneath the ice; he levies others; they perish in their turn; he is left abandoned and desolate in a moment; his power vanishes like a shadow; he begs for his life, and obtains it as a favour; and having become the ridicule of those who had formerly trembled in his presence, he dies forgotten in an ignominious exile. Meanwhile, the successor of Peter, delivered by such signal miracles of Providence, returns to his capital amidst the acclamations and applause of the people, who prostrate themselves on the way before him; he enters in triumph into that Rome which shall ever remain Christian; he re-ascends that throne which the storms of ages serve only to render more firm and unshaken; he recovers the undiminished inheritance of his predecessors; like them, he gives laws to all the Churches; he leaves the tiara as glorious and revered as ever to a successor whose virtues impart an additional lustre to it; and thus proves to the whole world, by a new and illustrious example, that man will never be able to overturn what the hand of God Himself has erected. *Positus est hic in resurrectionem.*

To pass on to other prodigies—would you desire examples of the protection which the same God grants to faithful dynasties and princes. Behold the great Constantine, the first emperor who embraced the faith—behold him from the beginning of his glorious career reading the promise of his future success in the very heavens, where a luminous cross appears to him, with this inscription—"In this thou shalt conquer;" and immediately ordering it to be engraved upon the shields of his soldiers—displaying it as a standard in the midst of his legions, and from that moment forward reckoning his years by the number of victories he gained—overthrowing the five idolatrous emperors who successively opposed him with their armies—becoming sole master of the Roman world, through which he established the adoration of the Divine Crucified Saviour—afterwards establishing a second empire as flourishing as the first—dying, at length, in a quiet old age, after a glorious reign of thirty years, and leaving after him an immortal name. After Constantine could I not adduce the instance of Cloris, and the battle of Tolbiac, which has been so miraculous, and so renowned in our annals, and the benedictions which have been communicated by the ministry of Saint Remi, to this prince, and to all his posterity? How much could I not add with regard to the pious Charlemagne—his faith and his devotion to the Roman Church, rewarded by an empire which remained so long hereditary in his family? What

admirable examples could I not find, in particular, in the history of the third line of our kings? But need I go further than the happy prodigy of our own days—than this sudden and unexpected, and evidently miraculous resurrection of our ancient dynasty, which has been the resurrection of France and the happiness of Europe? Oh, tell me, who has preserved this king and these august princes in their wanderings through so many different climates, and so often attacked by fire, and sword, and poison, during twenty-four years of danger and affliction? Who has brought back those children of St. Louis who were so long banished and forgotten? Who has covered them with the shield of His protection in the midst of those new conspiracies and plots which followed their first restoration? Who defended them against perfidious servants, and afterwards against triumphant enemies? Who has strengthened, in the midst of storms, that throne which has but lately trembled over the abyss, assailed by all the fury of unrestrained passions? Are you, my brethren, of the number of these blind men who see nothing in such great events, but a game of fortune, or the result of political contrivances? What! Do you not see a more lofty and a more profound cause? Do you not bear in mind that this country, which infidelity endeavoured to make the centre of its empire, has been, during a long course of ages, the most Christian kingdom, and one of the fairest portions of the Catholic Church? Have you forgotten the fact that our beloved princes are the heirs and the descendants of thirty-three monarchs, who have been the protectors of the religion, and the defenders of the faith of Jesus Christ; that they are the descendants of a pious sovereign who placed his kingdom and his race under the protection of the Mother of our Saviour; that they are the progeny of a king ennobled amongst the saints, and all that remains of the blood of a martyred monarch! You may explain away the miracles which you behold in whatever manner you please; for my part, I regard them as a new victory of Christ against hell, which has been gained to restore us to ourselves and to our God. *Positus est hic in resurrectionem.*

Is not this august temple, in which I now address you, also an example, a sign, and a pledge of resurrection!* Must we not regard that period, as the period of its ruin, when it was degraded from its original destination, plundered of its sacred

* The Church of St. Genevieve, in Paris, which was re-opened in 1822, after having been defiled by the most sacrilegious profanation during the Revolution. The present sermon was preached on the occasion of its inauguration.

title, and disgraced by a blasphemous name, borrowed from pagan superstition—when the venerable emblems which adorned its walls disappeared under the chisel of impiety, to make way for obscene and abominable images—when tombs were seen instead of altars—when impure dead bodies usurped that homage which should be rendered to the living God, and to the immortal patroness of this capital of the first kingdom in the world. What silence, what melancholy sadness, then reigned through the profaned holy place! Did it not seem to you, my brethren, as if this stately edifice were robed in mourning? Its aspect, on whatsoever side you viewed its majestic pillars, and its lofty porticoes, was an aspect of indescribable anguish. And when you heard that its stones burst asunder, and that its vaulted roof which pierced the very heavens threatened to fall upon it, and to crush it, must you not have felt that this magnificent structure was sinking under the oppression of shame and sorrow? But our most Christian monarch who has been reinstated in the palace of his fathers, by so many miracles, could not long endure that the holy patroness of his subjects should be exiled from the habitation which his ancestor had established for her with a truly royal magnificence. The august Church of St. Genevieve is now re-opened, and from this moment forward, it will not cease to resound with hymns of joy and thanksgiving. How glorious is this day on which it has been blessed by the chief pastor of this diocese, in presence of the children of St. Louis, the several corporations of the state, a numerous body of clergy, and an immense concourse of people who have crowded to make some atonement to religion, and to show forth their gladness.

Oh, impiety! have you felt this recent stroke? When you thus behold all your plans defeated, one after another, and all your hopes frustrated, will you not perceive, at length, that it is against God your struggles are directed, and that He laughs to-day as He has done for the last six thousand years, at your unavailing efforts? *Qui habitat in cœlis irridebit eos.** What has become of your worship of the tenth day, and the ridiculous solemnity of your festivals, and the indecencies of your orgies? Where are those infamous goddesses whom you wished to make us adore, and this colossus before which you burned incense? *Ubi sunt dii eorum in quibus habebant fiduciam?*† What has it availed you to change the names of days, and months, and seasons, to demolish so many sanctuaries, to shed so much

* "He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them."—*Ps.* ii. 4.

† "Where are their gods in whom they trusted?"—*Deut.* xxxii. 27.

blood, and to throw the world into confusion? Jesus Christ was yesterday; He is to-day; and He shall be the same for ever.* See how all that has been foretold is fulfilled day after day; how all things quietly resume their accustomed course; and how, after so much declamation and such violent outcries, after so many factions and intrigues, after so much violence and rage, after so many vain and insulting triumphs, shame and vexation are the only and the final advantage which you attain. Contemplate the ceremony of this day; behold this multitude of the faithful assembled together with reverence in the house of the Lord, testifying their sentiments by their tears; behold this altar which has been raised once more, this temple which recovers all its former glory; behold this worthy representative of the apostolic See,† who is about to celebrate the Divine mysteries in the midst of our nation, and in the very spot which you vainly strove to dedicate to the worship of devils. Is this the spectacle which you expected to behold when, in the intoxication of treacherous success, you twice proclaimed that the Papal power was destroyed, and the oracles of the prophets contradicted. See now how all your own predictions are much more really confounded, and listen to the warning which I address to you from this pulpit. I call to witness this sacred edifice which seems to arise from its ruins this day; I call to witness this powerful patroness whom we invoke, and this hill which is honoured by her name, from which she protects this great city; I call to witness the solemnity of this sacred festival, that thy reign is at an end! France is now a Christian land, and she wishes for ever to remain so; she abjures for evermore the doctrines of those whose impure remains she has flung with horror from this sacred spot; she renews her ancient vows of fidelity to her God; she drives you back again to the bottom of that hell from whence you have come forth; the hour of your ruin and of our resurrection has arrived at last. *Positus est hic in ruinam et in resurrectionem.*

If time allowed me to point out, in conclusion, the effects of the powerful protection of the Saviour, not only of entire societies, dynasties, and princes who adore Him, but of every individual who serves Him with fidelity, I would direct your attention, in the first place, to the glory which is enjoyed, even upon earth, by that multitude of saints and martyrs who, having encountered every danger and sustained every sacrifice

* *Heb.* xiii. 8.

† The Archbishop of Nisibe, Nuncio of Pius VII.

for His sake, have been raised from the depths of humiliations and torments to honours which other mortals could never reach. What are the triumphs of a day, which are decreed to conquerors and heroes, in comparison with the long and immortal triumphs of the friends of God, whose very tombs and ashes are the objects of the veneration and reverence of the people, whose praises are combined with the praises of God Himself in our temples, whose virtues the Church celebrates in every place, and whose miracles she relates to every generation! Then, referring more particularly to the illustrious dead of our own days, I would appeal to yourselves whether there are any who ascended the scaffold with more constancy and firmness, or left behind them a name, encircled by greater reverence and love than those who have confessed Jesus Christ in their dying hour—beginning with the most august victims, and ending with the most obscure priest, or the most humble virgin who has been sacrificed for the faith. But, my dear friends, it will depend upon yourselves to learn, by your own experience, the miracles of resurrection and salvation which may be wrought by the grace of the Redeemer. Oh! I appeal to you, whoever you be, whom impiety and the disorders which accompany it have buried in a bottomless abyss of misery—you whose heart is wasted by pleasures, and withered by the disgust which springs from the gratification of your passions, and enslaved by ignominious habits, of which you feel the shame, but which you despair of being able to subdue—you who drag on a body enfeebled, a mind which has grown old in guilt, and wasted by dark remorse, and a name, perhaps dishonoured by a vicious life—return to this Divine liberator, who breaks every chain, and heals every disorder. Return to Him and your soul will blossom like a parched-up plant, upon which the dew of heaven had fallen, and your youth will be renewed like that of the eagle, and peace and true happiness and innocence itself will be restored to you with piety; hope and joy, such as you neither know nor can comprehend, will gain an entrance into your heart; you will feel as if you were born to a new life, and you will adore with so many others who were converted before you, the merciful power of Him who makes the dead start from the tomb, and brings back the sinner from the very gates of hell *Positus est hic in resurrectionem.*

Therefore, my brethren, as there is no other name under heaven by which individuals and nations can be saved, except the name of Jesus, let us all—priests, magistrates, soldiers, citizens of every class—prostrate ourselves at the feet of this Divine Infant; let us entreat of Him to grant the resurrection

of our souls and the salvation of our common country; and whilst He offers Himself this day to His Father for our sake, let us offer and dedicate ourselves to Him without reserve; let us acknowledge Him as our great Master and supreme King, in order that He may be mercifully pleased to receive a repenting nation once more as His people, and to admit us all, upon a future day, as His subjects, into His everlasting kingdom. *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE GREATNESS OF THE SAINTS.

FOR THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

"I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne."—*Apoc.* vii. 9.

NEVER did mortal behold a more delightful spectacle than that which the apostle St. John beheld, when in that glorious vision which he has recorded, heaven opened wide to his view, and he beheld the Lamb of God seated upon His throne, and in His presence the blessed host of the predestined—these generous conquerors of the world, of hell, and of themselves—who bearing palms in their hands, and crowns upon their heads, and shining resplendent with a divine light, and inebriated with never-ending delights, celebrated in hymns of thanksgiving the glory of their triumph, and the ineffable bounty of their Creator. It is the same spectacle—a spectacle which is so consoling, but at present concealed from our corporeal eyes—which the Church invites us never to refrain from contemplating with the eyes of faith. This fruitful mother of all the saints exhibits with complacency all those honours, and all that felicity which her first-born already enjoy, in order thereby to excite our hopes, and to inflame our desires. "Such," she declares, "is the glory which the Lord has in store for all those who have lived in holiness upon earth."—*Gloria hæc est omnibus sanctis ejus.**

Sanctity must be something exceedingly great, my brethren, whereas the great God of the universe has prepared such magnificent rewards for it. The saints have been the objects of

* *Ps.* cxlix. 9.

His thoughts from all eternity. They are the measure of the duration of His works, and next to Himself the end of them all. It is for them He has created the world; it is for the consummation of the saints that the world lasts, and generations succeed each other. All the melancholy or happy events which engross the attention of mankind, which constitute the history of individuals or families, or compose the annals of nations—all those mighty revolutions which overturn or raise up kingdoms and empires—in a word, all the vicissitudes of human affairs are all commanded or permitted for the exclusive benefit of the elect *—propter electos.** The Word incarnate has been made flesh, and the most divine mysteries have been accomplished for the sake of the elect. The Supreme Judge will erect His tribunal, upon the last day, with no other view than to make a solemn promulgation of the glory of His elect, and to vindicate their characters from the taunts of their enemies before the world at large. Heaven—the august habitation of the Most High—is the kingdom of the elect which has been prepared to receive them from the foundation of the world. *Paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi.*†

Let us again descend in spirit to the earth, and let us see how the Lord honours His saints there. During their life-time they have often commanded the course of nature, and appeared with an imposing majesty in the presence of kings and princes. *Glorificavit illum in conspectu regum.*‡ After death their bones have prophesied, and their ashes have performed prodigies. Whilst the mortal remains of the mightiest monarchs descend into the corruption of the grave in which their mortal glory often lies entombed along with themselves, the sacred relics of the friends of God repose upon their altars; their venerated images become the ornaments of our temples; their names and their memories are blessed by every faithful people. We distinguish the days of the year by the veneration which we pay to each of them; and the return of every year brings round a more solemn day upon which we unite them all together in the homage which we pay them, as they are united in the happiness which they enjoy, and upon which we joyfully celebrate the memory of their virtues and the glory of their common triumph. *Gloria hæc est omnibus sanctis ejus.*

It is thus the Church co-operates with the designs of God to honour those whom He has chosen and whom He crowns. And can I now more successfully enter into the spirit of the present festival than by consecrating this discourse to the praise

* *Mark* xiii. 20. † *Matt.* xxv. 34. ‡ *Eccles.* xlv. 3.

of all the saints! But, alas! my brethren, must not the panegyrist of the saints at the present day be prepared to encounter multitudes to contradict him in this world which still arrogates to itself the name of Christian, but which has long since lost all pretensions to that title? and can the panegyric of the heroes of the gospel be anything else except their vindication at the present day? To how great an extent has impiety carried its audacity? Not content with persecuting and calumniating the disciples of Jesus whilst they lived upon earth, it pursues them to heaven itself, and continues to insult them even after they have become the objects of public worship and veneration. If we believe its false assertions, the saints whom we invoke have been merely men of feeble and contracted intellects and mean and vulgar dispositions; their piety has been a mere childish deceit; almost all their virtues—excuse my repeating those blasphemies—may be reduced to a stupid fanaticism; and if a few individuals amongst them have deserved some degree of commendation, they are very much inferior to those mighty men whose actions are recorded in profane history. Will such reproaches as these impose upon us? No, my brethren, it is very easy to show how unjust they are. In our refutation of them we shall not merely refute them by showing how unfounded they are, by proving that the saints have been men of enlightened minds, of resolute and elevated hearts, of upright, unsullied, tender, and generous dispositions, and that would be sufficient for our purpose; but to place all their glory in its proper point of view, and to confound their detractors for ever, we shall demonstrate that the saints have been the only truly great men whom the world has produced, to the exclusion of these men whose talents are so much applauded, and these imaginary heroes and sages whom the world admires.

O Church triumphant! assembly of the just made perfect! precious elect of every generation and every people! brilliant and immortal court of the mighty King!—it is to thee I dedicate and consecrate the efforts of my zeal this day; it is thy cause I defend, and thy rights I endeavour to vindicate. May the Lord bless my undertaking through your intercession; and may He grant to His unworthy minister those graces of strength, persuasiveness, and instruction, without which all our discourses are nothing more than an empty sound of words which are incapable of making the most faint impression upon the heart. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I ask you, my brethren, who are they who really deserve the name of great men? by what marks must we discern them? Is

it not, first, by an extraordinary elevation in their views and conceptions; secondly, by a sublimity of courage which nothing can alarm or subdue; and, thirdly, by great and wonderful actions and exertions? If such be the characteristics of true greatness—as I can have no doubt they are—I venture to assert that they can only be found amongst the saints or amongst those great men whom religion has formed.

I.—With regard to the first of these characteristics—that is to say, their elevation of views and conceptions—can it be said that they are endowed with great and sublime conceptions who are ambitious of nothing save what is vain, earthly, and perishable? Now, let the world exhibit to our view all those heroes of whom it boasts—all those men of extraordinary talents whose glory it desires should dazzle us—famous warriors, statesmen, philosophers, sages, orators, and writers—to what have they all aspired? What has been the object of their thoughts, the end of their labours, when these have not been consecrated and ennobled by faith and religion? Some of them have rushed forward into the midst of accidents; lived in the midst of alarms, squandered their treasures and the blood of their subjects; spread ruin and desolation far and wide, in order to conquer provinces, to subdue nations, and to invest themselves with a phantom of power which death must soon dispel. Others have wasted themselves with midnight watchings in order to acquire a name by some superiority in human science, although they were unable to compass its extent or even to see its limits, notwithstanding all their efforts. Others, in fine, have employed all their exertions in displaying their wisdom, their ingenuity, their eloquence, or their other talents upon the world's stage. They have all regarded it as the most exalted happiness to be able to preserve an imaginary life in the memory of men after death, and to continue to make some little noise upon earth after they had disappeared from it for ever. This is all that they proposed to themselves as the reward of so much danger, fatigue, and toil; this has been the ambition of those minds who are honoured with the title of great. But who can refrain from exclaiming here with a venerable sage whom God inspired—*Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity! Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.** What does it avail this conqueror to have reigned over vast territories when, out of all his possessions, he shall merely retain a little dust with which his own is confounded? What will become of his proud dominion whose weight he forced whole nations to feel when the meanest of his subjects will trample his ashes

* *Eccles.* i. 2.

beneath their feet! *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.* What shall the man of science retain after all his knowledge and enlightenment—what will this celebrated orator or writer retain of that fire of genius in which they gloried—when themselves and all their powers and faculties will be extinguished in the coldness and darkness of death? *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.* What benefit does an imaginary immortality afford the man who, in reality, is no more! and what does he gain from a vain celebrity when the voice of its commendation cannot be heard in the grave? *Vanitas vanitatum et omnia vanitas.*

Let us consider whether the ambition of the saints has not been a more noble one, and whether they have not elevated their thoughts and desires to loftier purposes. They have viewed the whole earth, and contrasted it with the immensity of their own hearts, and they found it very small. They would not have accepted the empire of the universe as their inheritance. They perceived that this is not the country of the children of God, but a place of exile and probation; that this visible world, notwithstanding all the wonders which it contains, is not the most perfect work of the Creator's hands, but merely the outline, and, as it were, the first sketch of another greater and more perfect world, in which the Divine magnificence is displayed to its full extent. They knew that beyond this valley of tears, this theatre of misery and crime, is the kingdom of sanctity and peace where there is no vicissitude, nor fear, nor sorrow—where the elect of God enjoy delights that are ever renewed in the midst of unalloyed repose. Amid the perishable objects by which they were surrounded, their hearts always turned with ardour towards that habitation of unchangeable and never-ending happiness. They never ceased to speak of this blessed country and its ineffable loveliness. They eagerly read all that the sacred Scriptures related concerning it. They felt a joy such as no language could express when they pictured to themselves those new heavens and that new earth, that sun of justice which never sets, that bright day of eternity, that wonderful city which the Divine Lamb enlightens, which is watered by a torrent of heavenly delights, encircled by an enclosure of peace, and filled with an abundance of all blessings. Filled with such delightful images they exclaimed with transports of admiration, "What charms must thou not possess for those who inhabit thee, O city of the living God, when even now thy appearance is so glorious and so beautiful to us who view thee at so great a distance! Oh! how vile and despicable do not all things appear to us

here below when they are compared with what is related of thee!" *Gloriosa dicta sunt de te, civitas Dei.** It was not a chimerical immortality—an immortality of name and memory—that they promised themselves to enjoy in that region of life, but the real and perfect immortality of their whole being. They not only hoped that their soul—that spiritual and incorruptible substance—should live for ever, but that even this body of clay, after having by its dissolution, fulfilled the decree which has been pronounced against all flesh, should one day hear in the tomb the voice of the Son of man; that its extinguished ashes and insensible dust should be restored to animation by the breath of Him who first produced it out of nothing; and that renewing its youth, like that of the eagle, and adorned with imperishable strength, and grace, and loveliness, it should then be admitted to a participation in the glory and happiness of that soul to which it should be again united for all eternity.

Without waiting to consider senseless objections, or to make the foolish inquiry whether it is possible for Omnipotence itself to restore that life which it has once taken away, and to collect the scattered elements of the body which it had created, they felt an agreeable consolation in the thought, that as the grain of seed is decomposed in the earth, to spring up again with more splendour than before, so also the body of the just man will descend into the corruption of the grave only to arise incorruptible, and will die only to live again immortal. They saw nothing in this prodigy but what was precisely adapted to the greatness and goodness of God who made man to His own image; and they felt it to be a benefit worthy of the death of a man-God—a divine result of His glorious resurrection. Whilst the infidel indulged himself with the awful hope of annihilation—whilst the foolish children of this world confined all their desires to that time which escaped from them with such a rapid flight—the saints of every age followed the maxims to which one of themselves first gave utterance more than three thousand years since—*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God, whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold and not another. This my hope is laid up in my bosom. Reposita est hæc spes mea in sinu meo.*†

O hope of seeing and enjoying the possession of God! noble and sublime sentiment!—the want of great hearts which

* *Ps.* lxxxvi. 3. † *Job* xix. 27.

nothing limited can satisfy, and whose cravings infinity can alone appease! O holy souls! It is of God you were hungry and thirsty upon earth; He was the object of your desire in heaven itself; and, without Him all the delights of that blessed abode would have lost their attraction and value in your eyes. You knew that He alone was the source of all good, the centre of all perfection, the place of your repose and happiness. It is here, in the bosom of God, that your minds, which were desirous of knowledge, were filled with the plenitude of all science, contemplating truth in its principle, embracing all things in a glance, and beholding light in light itself. *In lumine tuo vidi lumen.** It is here your heart should have quenched its burning thirst after happiness, and gratified its unbounded desires and insatiable love, and received *good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over.*† It is here your lawful and generous passion for true glory should have been fully gratified, when, crowned by the hand of God Himself, you must reign with Him for ever—when bathed in that ocean of glory which surrounds His throne, and altogether filled with that splendour, you shall become like Himself, as the mirror which reflects the rays of the sun shines with the brightness of that luminary, and diffuses its light around. *Similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est.*‡ With minds always riveted upon those great objects of your desires, you soared above all human concerns; you dwelt more in heaven than on earth; you regarded the glory of this world as a vapour which vanishes in the air, the pleasures of the senses as a reproach, life as a flower which withers in a day; all the learning and wisdom of this world were mere ignorance and folly in your eyes; you counted the possession of all the riches of the universe as a loss; *Quæ mihi fuerunt lucra arbitratus sum detrimenta.*§ And, to die, in order to live with Christ, was the only gain which you desired. *Mihi vivere Christus est et mori lucrum.*‖

I ask you, my brethren, are these low and grovelling sentiments? Are they not, on the contrary, the most exalted and divine conceptions that can gain access to the heart of man? And as the saints alone have entertained them, am I not warranted in the inference, that among them alone can be found that extraordinary elevation of views and conceptions which is the first characteristic of true greatness? Let us now proceed

* *Ps.* xxxv. 10. † *Luke* vi. 38.

‡ "We shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is."—1 *John* iii. 2. § *Philip.* iii. 7. ‖ *Ibid.* i. 21.

to the second of these characteristics—which is, sublimity of courage—and let us see whether there is not a certain degree of it which can only be attributed exclusively to the saints, that is to say, the heroes who have been formed by religion.

II. I do not allude at present to that courage which makes men encounter death in battle; for that is an ordinary virtue, and may almost be styled a vulgar one, inasmuch as all warriors have either received it from nature, or acquired it by the mere practice of the profession of arms. However, if it were necessary to institute a comparison even with regard to this bravery, I would ask whether there have ever existed any heroes who were more intrepid in war than Josue, Gideon, David, and those valiant Macchabees who shed their blood to the last drop for their country and their religion? And Maurice, with his glorious Theban legion—were they not all valorous soldiers before they became illustrious martyrs? Had not the Thaumaturgus of our nation, Martin of Tours, wielded the sword, and fought with honour before he became a holy bishop? And was not our own St. Louis a model for great generals and great kings, as well as for humble and fervent Christians? But omitting the consideration of warlike valour for the present, we may observe in the saints other descriptions of courage which are far more difficult of attainment, and far less frequently to be met with.

This world, whose views are all so erroneous when it pronounces its judgment on whatever appertains to religion, and whose assertions are all so many calumnies, when it speaks of the disciples of Jesus Christ, would endeavour to exhibit piety as a meekness of the heart, and a virtue with which cowards are alone endued. This world, which trembles before the mere shadow of rank or power—which is always so prone to worship the caprice of the basest tyrants, and to applaud crime when successful, and injustice when triumphant—would bestow the character of pusillanimity and weakness upon the fear of God, that heroic fear which elevates the soul above every other dread—which makes it independent of every circumstance and every creature—which is alone capable of enabling it to face every danger and to suffer every affliction. Is it for hearts which are destitute of all fortitude that this gospel, which anathematizes the cowardly, and places them on the same level with hypocrites and adulterers, has been framed? Were those men devoid of all spirit whom Jesus Christ called to follow himself—telling them that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that the violent alone bear it away? Is nothing more than a trifling courage necessary in order to make

a man divest himself of all he possesses, and renounce himself in order to become the victim of ignominy and outrages, of torments and the most cruel death? And is not this precisely what the saints have done! See how many rich men have sold all their possessions to distribute the price of them among the poor, and consigned themselves to all the rigours of extreme want—leaving their sumptuous palaces to immure themselves in gloomy solitudes—exchanging the softness of their luxurious couches for a few moments of wearisome repose upon barren, rugged rocks, or in the depths of howling caverns—substituting the water from the stream, and the wild fruits of the desert for the costly viands and delicate wines of their tables—imposing upon themselves long watchings, almost continual fasts, and an unbroken silence—enduring the pinching cold of winter, and the scorching heat of summer, without the least alleviation—and making a body, which was once habituated to every enjoyment, become the victim of the most rigid austerities of penance. Such were Paul, Arsenius, Pelagius, Mary of Egypt, and a multitude of others, whose names I could mention if necessary. Compare these with so many pretended great men, who never refuse themselves the least indulgence which nature craves, and tell me has not the courage of the saints surpassed the courage of those imaginary great men.

But, courage of this sort is still inferior to that which despises insult and reproach, and preserves an evenness of mind in the midst of ill-treatment and unmerited contempt. How many souls who are believed to be strong and generous in other matters would sink beneath human respect, and shrink from the profession of that faith which they secretly esteem, or from the practice of those virtues which they love, through fear of the derision and censure of a world which is the enemy of piety and innocence! How many of those who acquired the reputation of heroism, have been inconsolable in humiliation, unable to endure the smallest indication of contempt, and after having received an insult, which was often very trifling, could find no other remedy for the wound which had pierced their hearts so deeply, save in their own death, or in that of the rash being who had offended them? Oh! to what an eminence were they elevated above every infirmity of self-love—that most conceited, and, at the same time, most cowardly passion of the human heart—who could not only forgive an injury, but even love its author, and take revenge upon him by favours alone—who, estimating the boisterous applause of this world at its proper value, accounted it as nothing, and following the dictates of their own consciences, and not the observations of

others as their rule of action, exclaimed with a sublime simplicity and an humble pride, "Thy judgments, O man! exercise very little influence upon my actions; he that judgeth me is the Lord!"—*Qui autem judicat me Dominus est*,*—who passed through the clamours, the insults, and the calumnies of this frivolous and corrupt world, without suffering themselves for a moment to be diverted from the great end towards which all their efforts were directed—who, so far from fearing the contempt and the insults which virtue brought them, on the contrary sought them, and centred all their glory upon them. How great do you appear in my eyes, O Apostles of my Saviour! when, after having suffered an ignominious scourging before the council of the Jews, you *went from the presence of the council rejoicing*—because *you were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus*.† How much superior to all that is human do you not seem to me, O Paul! when you exult in such magnificent terms, not for having been taken up to the third heavens, but for having been naked, wandering, proscribed, and loaded with chains upon earth—when you enumerate with pleasure the indignities which you have endured for the sake of the gospel, the scourgings and the blows which you have received, the prisons into which you have been cast along with malefactors, as your title to our veneration; and when you exclaimed with accents of triumph, whilst exhibiting such amazing humiliations—*We are made a spectacle to the world, and to Angels, and to men. Spectaculum facti sumus mundo, et Angelis, et hominibus*.‡ And what has been the cause of such triumphant rejoicings, O holy Apostle? It was because you have constantly been *the refuse of this world—the offscouring of all men until now. Tanquam purgamenta hujus mundi omnium peripsema usque adhuc*.§ Oh! disciples, worthy of a Master overwhelmed with reproaches, and crucified between two criminals! This is a new description of courage to which the heroes of this world are complete strangers—a courage of which they are incapable of forming even the faintest conception—a courage which is the attribute of those alone who have completely trampled upon all the meanness, and all the cowardice of human pride, and who have overcome and even annihilated themselves by the omnipotent power of a God humbled even unto the humiliation of the cross.

But, it may be said that although the great men of this world did not possess courage of this description, they were,

* 1 *Cor.* iv. 4.
† *Acts* v. 41.
‡ 1 *Cor.* iv. 9.
§ *Ibid.* 13.

nevertheless, endowed with courage of a higher order; and that many among them may be found to possess such firmness and constancy, such heroic devotedness and invincible fortitude in the midst of tortures, and even in the arms of death, as must elicit our warmest admiration and esteem. I acknowledge, my brethren, that there have been instances of this sort which merit all the commendation that has been lavished upon them. But what reply can we advance here? Must the saints yield the victory in this respect? Ah! come forth—martyrs of Jesus Christ! Enter the lists, ye countless multitudes of heroes of every class and condition, of every age and sex. Come forward in the first rank, and exhibit your honourable scars and trophies, illustrious elders! who, though years had silvered your heads, and bowed your wasted frames, nevertheless exhibited a strength and fortitude which nature does not bestow upon the most robust youth. Present your venerable decay as an impregnable fortress against the enemies of your faith, and behold all the cruelty of tyrants, and all the rage of their satellites crushed and broken against it. Come forth, generous children, who evinced such an ardent desire of dying for your God, in the first dawn of existence—who played with the instruments of torture in the midst of your enraged executioners, and were seen to smile, even in death, at the crown of martyrdom which had been held forth by an invisible hand. Come forth, brave women, intrepid virgins, who laid aside that weakness which is natural to your sex, who ran forth to encounter the wild beasts which were ready to devour you, and hurried to the flames, or wearied out the rage of those who exhausted all the inventions, and all the refinements of the most barbarous cruelty against you in vain. Come forth, in fine, you all, to whatsoever class you may belong, who, in the midst of tortures, racks, and blazing furnaces—amidst the scattered wreck of your mutilated limbs, and the torrents of your blood which streamed around you, and the countless hideous shapes of death which assailed you on every side—with a countenance unmoved, and your eyes fixed on heaven, with the name of Jesus upon your lips, and joy depicted on every feature, seemed rather to triumph than to die—who astonished and confounded your persecutors by the force of your unexampled heroism, and compelled an idolatrous people to exclaim, with one accord, that there was something heavenly in the firmness which you evinced—who often disarmed your very executioners, and beheld them fall trembling and converted at your feet. Martyrs! where now are those who presumed to declare themselves your rivals, and to dispute the palm of courage with you? It

is you who have overcome the world, and compelled it to bow down beneath the yoke of the gospel; you have come forth out of great tribulation; you have washed your robes in the blood of the Lamb; and, encircled with the lustre of never-fading glory, you shall shine like the stars for all eternity in the kingdom of God, whilst nothing remains for so many vain heroes, the slaves of their passions and the martyrs to a foolish pride, but eternal confusion and disgrace.

Therefore, my brethren, the saints also excel by that sublimity of courage which is the second characteristic of true greatness. We shall now show that they also possess the third and final characteristic, which consists in great and wonderful actions, in a no less eminent degree than the two former ones.

III.—Great men perform great actions, and leave behind them illustrious monuments of their genius and their virtues. Will any one ask me what have the saints done that can be called great or wonderful? Ah! my brethren, how easily could I answer that question! and how vast is that field which is now open to my view, if time allowed me to traverse its whole extent! I would pass in review all the illustrious men in every department, whom the ages of antiquity or modern times have produced, and I would defy them all to attempt a comparison between their most boasted undertakings and those of the saints. For instance, I would ask a Solon and a Lycurgus whether their ephemeral laws could be compared with the laws of Moses, which still subsist in undiminished vigour, at the end of three thousand years, which perpetuate the existence of a people to whom they were given to an unlimited duration, and by some mysterious miracle preserve that people apart from all others, in the midst of the many nations amongst whom they are dispersed, which make them survive all others, and which impress upon them a peculiar and exclusive character of immortality. I would ask the celebrated poets of Greece and Rome, with the same confidence, whether they could attempt to put any of their verses in competition with the sublime canticles of David, the pathetic lamentations of Jeremias, weeping over the ruins of the temple and the holy city, the thundering menaces of Isaias, who seemed to hurl his bolts from the very summit of heaven; and I would say to them, "In your writings may be found the genius of man imitating Divine inspiration, but in the writings of the prophets may be found a truly Divine inspiration which surpasses all the efforts of the human intellect." I would then address the most celebrated orators of the ages of Pericles and Augustus, and compel them to admit that Gregory of Nazianzen, Basil,

Chrysostom, and Ambrose, have surpassed them in eloquence I would appeal to historians, and convince them how much inferior their most beautiful narratives are to the simple, but magnificent history of the origin of things, in which we behold the Creator producing the heavens and the earth out of nothing, forming chaos into harmony and order, commanding the light to be, and instantly obeyed by the light which begins to exist at His word, sending the two great luminaries which He formed to rule the day and night, to pursue their orbits, and scattering the stars through the boundless space. I would summon those proud philosophers, some of whom were styled divine; and they should blush at their stately and barren declamations, at their false wisdom and their scandalous morals, as soon as they beheld that gospel which suddenly diffused throughout the world so pure and original a light, which, without a display of words, taught every great and necessary truth, imparted a knowledge of the true God, and of the worship which was alone worthy of Him, established the eternal principles of the moral law, and taught men how to love and practise the virtues which those vain theorists could only make the subject of their disputes. Let conquerors next come forth. What would I oppose to them! Christians! A conquest far more rapid, more extensive, and more astonishing than theirs—the conquest of the universe itself, which was gained in a few years by twelve poor fishermen, without arms, without treasures, without any human assistance, but with the sole power of that divine cross which first excited all the powers of earth against it, and soon after forced them to bow down before it. The founders of kingdoms and empires should appear in their turns; I would show them the Church—that kingdom which is at the same time, spiritual and visible—extended from the east to the west, resting for the last eighteen hundred years upon its unshaken basis, and bidding defiance to all the efforts of this world and of hell itself; and I would ask them who amongst them all has established a society as great, as permanent, as wisely governed—a society which has withstood so many storms, and offers the same security of an endless duration. The benefactors of mankind should also present themselves. Alas! are there many real benefactors of mankind amongst the mighty personages whom this world applauds! But let them come forward such as they are. O Vincent of Paul! you alone would be sufficient to eclipse all their works—you who, although poor yourself, were able, by the miraculous resources of your charity, to support millions of the poor, to diffuse abundance through vast provinces which were wasted

by contagion, famine, and war—you who caused your inexhaustible gifts to flow through the most distant regions in which, without seeing yourself, men enjoyed your favours as they enjoy the favours of that Providence whose operations are all invisible—you who covered the whole extent of France with innumerable asylums for the sick, for abandoned infancy, for unprotected old age, for every class of the unfortunate—you who made your benevolence, to a certain extent, everlasting, by leaving it as an inheritance to a holy society of generous females devoted to the wants of the unhappy, the venerable servants of the suffering members of Jesus Christ. Ah! if the short reign of an antichristian philosophy among us has been sufficient to destroy the greater part of those precious monuments, for which our country and mankind were indebted to you, some of them still survive the fury which assailed them, to testify to the world at large, the extent of that power with which heaven endowed you for the benefit of mankind.

Who could enumerate all the services which have been rendered to society, and all the great exploits which have been performed by the saints; the habits of barbarous nations civilized, the monstrous superstitions of paganism, and the human sacrifices which stained the earth with blood, abolished; your fathers receiving the yoke of civilization along with that of the Gospel; your vast forests opened or cleared away, your lands cultivated, your deserts inhabited by St. Stephen of Citeaux, St. Bruno, and St. Bernard; the monasteries which they founded becoming the retreats of learning and virtue, and the safeguards in which all the treasures of sacred and profane antiquity were preserved, amid the ravages of barbarism; your first schools opened, and the first foundations of solid instruction, as well as of wise legislation, laid by the pious emperor Charlemagne, and the holy men, whom he invited from all parts of Europe, around his throne—the middle ages, enlightened by the writings of many saints, who were the only lights in their generation—those great religious orders established, which rendered a thousand times greater service to agriculture, to the arts, to science, and to literature, than all our universities and academies—your hamlets, your towns, and many of your cities founded by those saints whose names they bear even to the present day—magnificent temples erected to be the ornaments of your cities and rural districts—in a word, every kind of prosperity and greatness springing into existence at the call of religion, and attaining a progressive increase and development, until it reached that age which has just gone by, an age which has been the last of our glory, because it has been the last age

of our fidelity to the doctrines of the saints, and of our attachment to the faith of our fathers?

My brethren, this is a brief outline of the works of the saints, and of the benefits which they conferred, such as we have been enjoying them for the last fourteen hundred years. Oh! if I contrasted this picture with that of the works of infidelity during the last twenty-five disastrous years, when it has been said to it, *This is your hour and the power of darkness. Hæc est hora vestra et potestas tenebrarum.** But no, I shall not combine melancholy and alarming representations with the joy of the present solemnity, nor turn away your attention from the praise of those whose festival we this day celebrate. I have proved that they have performed great and wonderful actions, in every possible occurrence, and to convince you of this truth, I need not have recourse to miracles properly so called, to those gifts of miracles and prophecies which have often made them appear in the light of deities upon this earth. However, I cannot remain altogether silent respecting this portion of their glory. Notwithstanding the prejudices of certain minds which are more vulgar than is generally supposed, and which exclusively rely upon the sophisms, the impostures, and the sarcasms of our licentious and impious writers, it is not in the least unworthy of God to manifest His power occasionally, by suspending the laws of nature for weighty and important reasons; or, by means of His prophets, to foretel great events which may influence the progress of religion, and the destinies of mankind; or, by extraordinary signs, to lend a sanction to the mission of those whom He sends to announce His word to men. These wonders have been wrought in presence of such a multitude of witnesses: they have been so authentically attested by those who witnessed them—so openly proclaimed in presence of contemporary generations, while no voice was raised to contradict them, and so formally acknowledged by the very persons who were most interested in denying them—so clearly verified by the astonishing effects which they produced, and by the monuments of their power, which remain even to the present day—accompanied by so many circumstances which exclude even the possibility of illusion, and supported, in a word, by so many repeated and unexceptionable proofs—that the blindest ignorance, or the most obstinate knavery, can alone call their existence in question; and modern unbelief, by striving to destroy their credibility, has only succeeded, by its vain efforts, more clearly to confirm the belief of them.

* *Luke* xxii. 53.

He was therefore great whom the Lord God set over Pharaoh: who overcame the resistance of that idolatrous prince, by the ten plagues or terrible scourges with which he smote the whole land of Egypt—who opened a broad passage for millions of men, through the depths of the sea—held the waves suspended and enchained around them during their passage, and made those waves fall back upon their enemies to swallow them up—who quenched the thirst of an entire people, in the desert, with water, which he forced to issue from the rock, and fed them during forty years with the manna which the clouds of heaven daily brought them. They were great whom Jesus Christ had sent—who, during the reign of Tiberius, and his first successors - in a philosophical and unbelieving age—traversed the whole world, healing the sick, giving sight to those who had been born blind, and raising the dead to life—who wrought these miracles, not in hiding places, or in darkness, but in the light of day, in public places, in the midst of innumerable witnesses, who were believed in Rome, at Antioch, at Athens, at Corinth, the most enlightened and polished cities in the world—who triumphed over the synagogue and idolatry, proved the gods and priests of paganism to be impostors, compelled the delusions of false worship and the black deceits of magic to disappear before the light of true miracles, silenced the perplexed oracles, and finally subdued the learned and ignorant, the philosophers and their disciples, the people and the Cæsars, by the force of truth and the influence of a power which was manifestly supernatural. They were great—those prophets inspired by Heaven, who foretold this astonishing revolution many centuries before it was accomplished, and pointed out its precise period, and all the circumstances which attended it, as if they had beheld them with their own eyes—who announced the conception of a virgin, the birth of a God amongst men, His death upon a cross, the dispersion of a deicide people through all the nations of the earth, the vocation of the gentiles to the faith, the great and inexplicable change of an entire idolatrous world into a Christian world, and so many other events which are beyond all human foresight. They were great—these holy men who are the glory of modern times—Francis of Paul, Xavier, Charles Borromeo, who renewed all the prodigies of the primitive ages of Christianity, and proved that the God whom they served, is the God of wonders throughout all time. *Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis.**

Oh! how I love to contemplate this endless series, this unin-

* "God is wonderful in His saints."—*Ps.* lxvii. 36.

terrupted succession of saints, who have done honour to the true religion, and practised the most sublime virtues, from the just Abel and the most ancient patriarchs, to the small number of pure and fervent souls whom the eye of God can still discern amidst all the corruption of the present age! These are the only truly great men whom human generations have produced. They alone have been truly great, as you have seen, by a supernatural elevation in their views and conceptions, by a sublimity of courage which has been altogether Divine, by the miraculous and truly immortal exploits which they have performed. But, my brethren, they alone will seem truly great, above all others, when all earthly glory will be at length destroyed, when the figure of this world shall have passed away, when the whole earth will be consumed by flames, and the Just Judge will hold a solemn revision of all the judgments of men, to reinstate truth and justice in all their privileges, and to give vice and virtue, irreligion and piety, the recompense which they deserve. The Scriptures assure us that the saints will then appear with a noble constancy. *Tunc stabunt justi in magna constantia.** Elevated in the air, and seated upon thrones, to join with God Himself in passing judgment, they will pronounce the condemnation of those who have oppressed and persecuted them during life. *Adversus eos qui se afflixerunt.*† Their enemies, who were formerly proud and arrogant, being now dragged like criminals before them, unable to endure the indignation of their looks, or the splendour of their glory, as the sacred text assures us, *shall be troubled with terrible fear. Videntes turbabuntur timore horribili.*‡ As they never had faith in what they heard respecting the future triumph of the just, and the salvation which God had prepared for them, their amazement at such an unexpected spectacle shall equal their anguish. *Hinc mirabuntur in subitam inopinatæ salutis.*§ "What!" they shall exclaim, in accents stifled with sighs and lamentations, and abandoning themselves to dreadful despair, "are these the men whom we made the subject of our derision, whom we looked upon with disdain, of whom we spoke with insult. *Hi sunt quos habuimus aliquando in derisum.*‖ Alas! fools that we were, we esteemed their life madness. Their abandonment of the world, their absence from our societies and pleasures, their modesty which was startled by a word, their humble practices of Christian piety, their abstinence from forbidden meats, their frequentation of the

* *Wisd.* v. 1. † *Ibid.* 1. ‡ *Ibid.* 2.
§ *Ibid.* 2. ‖ *Ibid.* 3.

temples of the Lord—all this was nothing more than littleness of mind, vain scrupulousness, eccentricity, and madness, in our estimation. *Nos insensati vitam illorum æstimabamus insaniam.** When we beheld them despised and rejected by that brilliant world whose opinions were our supreme law, we doubted not that they were consigned to oblivion and reproach for ever. Because they were humble, we fancied them to be contemptible; and their death seemed without honour, because it was without pomp or fame. *Et finem illorum sine honore.*† But behold how they are now numbered amongst the children of God, in possession of the inheritance of the saints, elevated above the stars of heaven, whose brightness they eclipse by their own glory. *Ecce quomodo computati sunt inter filios Dei.*‡ All our thoughts were therefore error, and all our maxims illusion and falsehood." *Ergo erravimus.*§

Oh, fatal and irremediable error, whose consequences must be eternal! That we may never fall into it ourselves, my brethren—that we may not be condemned to witness the greatness and the felicity of the saints with sorrow and despair upon a future day—let us now contemplate their happiness with love and gladness; let us glorify those great souls with transports of admiration; let us unite with the Church in applauding the triumph of those true heroes; let us imitate those perfect models of every virtue; let us invoke the assistance of those powerful intercessors; and let us for the future cherish no other ambition and no other desire than to make ourselves worthy, by a truly Christian life, of being associated with their glory and happiness for all eternity. *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN.

FOR THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

"The just shall live for evermore."—*Wisdom* v. 16.

One of the great ends which the Church proposes to herself upon this day, in the veneration which she exhibits towards the immortal host of the saints, is, to excite within our minds the consideration and the desire of our own immortality. Alas! surrounded as we are, by so many miseries here below—subject to so many humiliating infirmities—condemned to the

* *Wisd.* v. 4.
† *Ibid.* 4.
‡ *Ibid.* 5.
§ *Ibid.* 6.

sad necessity of dying—what hope could be more precious to us than the hope of another and a better life, in which we shall be released from sin, and suffering, and death, for ever? And yet—to their shame be it spoken—how many men are insensible to this blessed hope! how many—must we confess it?—are the enemies of their own immortality! how many use violent means to persuade their minds not to believe it, and, in order to banish their alarm, take refuge in the awful, but yet ineffectual, hope of annihilation!

Oh, divine religion of the Christians! how consoling art thou to the just man! what transports and what delights dost thou cause him, when, not content with promising him a glorious and never-ending future beyond the limits of time, thou art also pleased to show him his brethren already in possession of the blessings which await him there—when thou dost lead him to sing and celebrate his future happiness in that which they enjoy—when, even before he is introduced into the blissful abode which they inhabit, thou dost even at present admit him to a participation in their joys by the heavenly splendour and holy jubilation of thy solemnities! Yes, my brethren, we may regard this festival as the festival of our own immortality. We shall, therefore, seek no other subject for this discourse besides that immortality itself, the consciousness of which is engraved by nature upon the bottom of our hearts, the belief of which is common to every people, although the perfect knowledge, the clear and accurate belief of it, can be had in the true religion alone. For if religion teaches us that there is something within us which shall never die, that the more noble portion of our being shall survive the dissolution of this body of clay, we have need of faith, to learn that the body itself shall not perish for ever; that the slime of which we are composed shall be animated with the breath of life; and that the whole man, after having triumphed over death, shall enjoy a never-ending happiness in the bosom of God. Thus will the beautiful expression of the Scripture—*that God created man incorruptible**—be fulfilled. No portion of his being shall be destroyed. His soul, being a spiritual substance, is, by its very nature, beyond the reach of death; *the torment of death shall not touch it*;† and his flesh, corruptible as it is, will descend into the dust of the tomb only to come forth incorruptible upon a future day. *For this corruptible must put on incorruption.*‡ Our present subject, then, may be expressed in two words: the immortality of the whole being of

* *Wis.* ii. 28. † *Ibid.* iii. 1. ‡ 1 *Cor.* xv. 53.

man—first, of the soul, which cannot perish; secondly, of the body, which shall return again to life, never more to die.

Great God! sustain my weakness. Endue me with words of life and fervour, which may awaken the belief and the desire of a blessed immortality. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I. To maintain that death is the destruction of the whole being of man, and that the soul sinks into annihilation at the moment of the dissolution of the human frame, is a blasphemy against God and a denial of His wisdom, His goodness, and His justice.

In the first place, if that insane supposition were admitted, what would become of the wisdom of the Creator? Is it not evident, at first sight, that man is the most excellent of all the beings which this visible world contains, and that every thing else has been created for him alone? For what other occupier could this magnificent palace have been prepared? For what other could the sun send forth its light and heat? For what other could the earth be covered with its harvests, and all nature display such a gorgeous and delightful spectacle? Is it not manifest to every one that the air which surrounds us is destined to support his life, the water of the streams to quench his thirst and to fertilize his fields, and the brute creation to serve him as their monarch? He is the only being here below who bears the impress of the Deity, and exercises his privileges with an authority which no other power can abridge. In vain do the savage monsters confide in their strength; he subjugates and controls them by the might of reason alone. In vain does the earth conceal the precious metals which his industry demands, within the depths of its mines; he tears them from its lowest depths, to fashion them to all his wants. In vain does the sea moan and heave its angry waves to heaven; he compels it to submit to his will, and, despite its murmurs, to bear him to the farthest limits of the globe. The winds may blow with fury, but he can arrest them in his sail, and compel them to bear him in safety to the wished-for haven. Every thing in existence becomes obedient to his will, or tributary to his wants. The stars in the firmament must be subjected to his calculations, and must serve to direct his course over the immense ocean and the vast deserts. The greatness of his being cannot be estimated by the space which his body occupies on earth, but by the extent of that intellect which spans the universe itself—which, from the invisible point in which it is situated, reaches to the summit of the heavens, and even to the depths of the abyss,

looks back into the past, embraces the present, and extends to a never-ending future.

It is the spirit or immaterial soul which constitutes the excellence and the dignity of man. It is this noble, active, intelligent, and free substance which is endowed with the faculty of thought, of knowledge, of judgment, and volition. She soars into the regions of the intellect, beholds invisible things, and conceives the idea of infinity. Being both by her nature and by the propensities which are peculiar to her, essentially distinct from that gross material body which she animates and directs, she feels herself degraded if she flatters its desires, and defiled if she obeys them; she chastises that body; she makes it her slave, and frequently her victim; she is passionately attached to all that is true, lovely, honourable, and sublime: she finds attractions in virtue which render all other goods contemptible in her sight; she prefers chastity to indulgence, glory to inaction, and duty to life itself; she soars aloft to the very bosom of God; she contemplates his ineffable perfections with joy; she blesses Him, she adores Him, and devotes herself, as a holocaust, to His love. Why should not every thing else be created for her benefit, when she alone is capable of knowing the Author of all things, of appreciating the full value of His favours, of holding a heavenly intercourse with Him, of presuming to call Him Father, and of paying Him, on behalf of all other creatures, that tribute of praise and thanksgiving which is due to Him? Such is the soul of man, who is formed to the image of God—who is *little less than the Angels**—that soul which is incomparably superior to every other object in creation—which is so pure and heavenly in its origin, so highly exalted above all that is earthly and corruptible, that the holy Scriptures even designate it as the breath of the Most High. *Inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitæ.*† And shall it be supposed, forsooth, because the slime of which the body is composed shall fall to pieces, that the soul, which is altogether spiritual, must therefore perish along with it? that because dust returns to dust, and the combination of gross and material elements is broken up and decomposed, must it be believed that a simple and immaterial substance, which is incapable of decomposition, as it is not composed of parts, shall, therefore, be crushed in the same ruin with that edifice of clay which falls to pieces? No; there cannot be a natural death, or dissolution for the soul. It can only be annihilated by an act of Divine Omnipotence. But, O great

* *Ps.* viii. 6. † *Gen.* ii. 7.

God! Thou wilt never annihilate it; Thy wisdom affords me a sufficient security that Thou wilt not.

What design could any one presume to impute to Thee in such a supposition? What! Thou hast created the whole world for man's benefit; and Thou wouldst create man for the sole purpose of destroying him? Thou wouldst have produced, at such immense cost, an empty shadow, which will vanish in a moment? Whilst we, feeble mortals as we are, would endeavour to impress the seal of immortality upon the works of our hands, canst Thou—Immortal and Divine Artist—source of life and being—make death and annihilation the end of all Thy works? Like a thoughtless and capricious architect, or a child at play, shalt Thou build only to pull down, and plant only to root up? And, at the end of time when this great destruction would have been consummated and this homicidal game would have been played, if one of the heavenly spirits should ask Thee over the ruins of this world, "Why, O Lord, hast Thou come forth from Thy repose? What end hast Thou proposed to Thyself in the stupendous work of forming a world which is now no more—in creating this countless host of animate and inanimate beings, all of which excited our admiration, and many of which were endowed with intelligence like ourselves, and practised such sublime virtues?" Thy reply to such questions could only be, "Look at those smouldering ruins, those piles of ashes, and bones, and dust; this is the end of so many miracles; this is the only object I had in view in my eternal designs; this is all that shall remain at length, after all the works of the Almighty." Oh, God! who could refrain from believing that he blasphemed Thy wisdom by attributing such language to Thee? But would such a design be less inconsistent with Thy goodness?

If we were destined, my brethren, to perish altogether, it should be confessed that the Creator, so far from acting as a father towards us, would, on the contrary, have distinguished our nature by so many glorious privileges, for the sole purpose of making us the most miserable amongst all created beings; and His most signal favours would be nothing more than refined cruelty in our regard. Man, when considered according to the body, is subject to more infirmity and affliction than any other living creature. He alone anticipates calamities by foreseeing them, aggravates the bitterness of their infliction, multiplies their number, prolongs them by reflection, by long-indulged remembrance, and by bitter regret. If old age and death befal others as well as him, he is the only being who is afflicted by the melancholy foretaste of decay; he is alone

capable of seeing the fatal moment approach, and of knowing the terrors of an inevitable dissolution, and the frightful corruption of the grave. What other but himself can experience the afflictions of the soul, which are a thousand times more intense than all the sufferings of the body—oppressive anxiety, corroding anguish, gloomy melancholy, and dreadful despair? In addition to the sorrows which assail himself, he is also a sharer in the afflictions of others. He is afflicted at the calamities of those he loves; he is alarmed at their dangers; he suffers, as it were, another death, whenever the grave deprives him of a friend or relative. In the midst of so many afflictions and miseries, to aggravate his torments to their fullest extent, he has a burning desire of happiness; he seeks and pursues it by an irresistible impulse of his nature; he endeavours to find it in every object which surrounds him; he would purchase it at any price; he cannot be contented without it; and yet he can find it no where. All that he encounters, as being capable of satisfying his desires, serves only to deceive himself and to inflame these desires still more strongly. He bears the idea of a perfect, unchangeable, infinite good, which is alone proportioned to his wants, and to the boundless cravings of his heart, deeply engraved upon his inmost soul, and he meets with nothing but limited and perishable goods; he tries these in succession, and he soon despises them. No beauty can continue to delight him for any length of time, because he discovers the defects of every one of them, and sooner or later they all decay. Amusements weary him with their frivolity: the pleasures of the senses are too contemptible, and they terminate in satiety and disgust; the embarrassment and anxiety which riches cause are greater than the joys which they bring, and they have never yet made a man happy; honours, dignity, and power, are nothing more than a dignified slavery, and their most frequent effects are torment, embarrassment, tiresomeness; glory is a vain sound, and a mere vapour which leaves the heart always empty, but never heals its sadness; science is a mere illusion, for the most learned are ignorant of more than all their studies could teach them. Couldst Thou, therefore, oh, my good God! have created man for the sole purpose of making him endure calamities which are but too real, and waste his energies in the pursuit of imaginary benefits? The brute can gratify his grovelling appetites, and he is happy; but for my part, I suffer a hunger and thirst which nothing in this world can appease; I feel a craving after existence, life, perfect beauty, unfailing truth, happiness without alloy, greatness and glory which must last

for ever. These are my wants; Thou hast given them to me, and to satisfy those wants, Thou hast prepared annihilation for me. If I can expect nothing beyond this present world and time, why shouldst Thou implant desires within me which are more vast than the universe, and which extend beyond all duration? why shouldst Thou give me thoughts which live upon infinity, and hopes which run into an endless future? If death must be my only portion, whence arises this horror of destruction, this longing and this invincible passion for immortality? If I must never see Thee, or never possess Thee, O Lord! why have I been allowed to know Thee? why have I learned that Thou art my only good? why hast Thou sunk an abyss in my bosom, which Thou alone canst fill? Being now fully satisfied and certain, O my God! that Thou hast not created a deceitful assurance within me, and that this earth is nothing more than a place of pilgrimage and trial, in which I prepare myself for a blessed eternity, I cheerfully submit to every trial which I must endure in order to arrive at the consummation and crown of all my wishes; but, if it be true—as senseless mortals have the temerity to assert—that Thou dost make me tread the toilsome path of life, in the midst of so much trouble and affliction, and Thou wilt sacrifice and annihilate me when my course is run, how can I bless Thee for having given me existence? how can I have faith in Thy goodness, which is the most adorable of all Thy attributes?

Finally, my brethren, to admit this monstrous supposition, would be to destroy all our notions of Divine justice. We cannot observe human society, and the moral world, without being struck by the discord and confusion which prevail there. What is to be seen there? and, above all, what have we ourselves beheld? Every right, and every obligation trampled under foot—adultery, rapine, and murder escaping with impunity—vice respected, and virtue scarce able to find the smallest encouragement—impiety applauded—religion consigned to insult and derision—horrible conspiracies openly formed against the sacred majesty of justice, and even against Heaven itself—frightful revolutions shaking the foundations of empires—scaffolds streaming with innocent blood—unjust laws condemning fidelity, and commanding treason and revolt—abominable doctrines inculcated upon unsuspecting childhood, imprudent youth, and an ignorant multitude, as if such doctrines had been the precepts of the sublimest wisdom—a plan devised, and perseveringly followed up, to plunge the world into its primitive chaos, and to degrade man to the condition of the brute—such a wonderful corruption

of public morality, that decency would not suffer us to reproach ourselves with the vices of which we have been guilty. If other generations have not witnessed the like excesses, at all times, there have been successful usurpations, barbarous wars, bloody rebellions, and acts of crying injustice; at all times there have been bad men who prospered, and good men, who groaned beneath oppression. And is it possible that God could remain a calm and careless spectator of such terrific scenes, and that He could suffer them to succeed each other throughout the whole course of ages, without adding to them a closing scene, and a consummation worthy of Himself, which may repair so many disorders, and ultimately accomplish the triumph of His justice? What do I say? Would He not aggravate the horrors of the scene, if He waited for all the actors who had borne a part in it, as they came forth from this theatre which had been so much defiled with blood and guilt, for the sole purpose of striking them down indiscriminately with the same everlasting death, making no distinction between the innocent and the guilty, between the saint and the sacrilegious wretch, between the murderer and his victim? O God! if such were thy judgments, who would dare to vindicate their justice? What answer would it be even in Thy power to make to a just man—to a martyr at the very moment when he expired in torments for Thy sake—when he was about to fall into Thy hands, and when he saw Thee ready to plunge him into annihilation, as the reward of his fidelity—if he should then say, "O Lord! I have fulfilled Thy will to its fullest extent; I have sacrificed everything to Thee, without reserve. To punish me for having loved Thee so dearly, unjust men who detested Thee, deprived me of the life of the body, and Thou wilt now annihilate my soul. I do not murmur. Let Thy sovereign will be fulfilled. I do not regret having shed my blood for Thy sake. I would readily shed it again, if it were in my power. But, oh, great God! must I, after all, expect the same end as Thy enemies and my murderers? Is this the reward which my submission to Thy justice merits? and if it were possible for any one to decide between us both, would he pronounce that Thou dost reward virtue as it deserves?"

Moreover, my brethren, this absurd doctrine, that the soul must perish, in whatsoever light we view it, directly leads to blasphemy. Let us, therefore, consign it to those who acknowledge no deity in this world except an evil genius, or a blind fatalism—to those who can admit no essential difference between themselves and the brute—who see nothing that can

distinguish their souls from the mire of which their bodies are composed—in other words, let us consign this detestable doctrine to the most wicked and senseless amongst all mankind. If such monsters exist, can they be supposed to belong to the human race? Has there ever been a people so savage and unenlightened as not to profess the doctrine of the immortality of the soul? Has there ever been a man so ignorant and stupid as not to find it engraved upon his intellect and heart? Has there ever been a wretch or infidel who could silence the voice of reason and the cry of nature within his breast, so as to persuade himself altogether that everything else must end with his crimes, and that those crimes will remain unpunished for all eternity? Has there ever been a virtuous soul who doubted her own immortality, or who was not as certain of it as of her very existence?

What else shall we add to such universal testimony? Come forth, sacred Scriptures! come forth with your sacred authority, and your magnificent promises, to confirm our hopes, and to bring our joy to its consummation. Tell us that death is nothing more than a deceitful appearance; *visi sunt oculis insipientium mori*,* that it leaves the soul in possession of its whole life; *vivet anima mea*;† that it merely breaks asunder the mortal bonds of the just man, and opens the way for him to rest and peace. *Illi autem sunt in pace.*‡ This is what we love to hear; this is what consoles us in every trial; makes every sacrifice which virtue demands, both light and easy; makes us love our faith§—which sometimes gives us a rapturous elevation above ourselves, transports us, by anticipation, into the land of the living, into the region of immortality, and gives us a delicious foretaste of the ineffable pleasures which are enjoyed there. *Credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium.*‖

But it is not enough that our souls should never perish. Our bodies shall arise never more to die.

II. As the soul never dies, if the body, which must die, were not destined to rise again upon a future day, the consequence would be, that this admirable combination of two substances which are so different in their natures, and united together by a secret and incomprehensible union, this masterwork of the wisdom and power of God, would be destroyed for ever by the stroke of death; but this combination is precisely

* "In the sight of the universe they seemed to die."—*Wisd.* iii. 2.
† "My soul shall live."—*Ps.* cxviii. 175.
‡ "But they are in peace."—*Wisd.* iii. 3. § *Ps.* cxiv. 1.
‖ "I believe to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living."—*Ps.* xxvi. 13.

what we call man; and, therefore, if the two portions which compose his being were never again to be united, and if one of them perished beyond recovery, the most wonderful of all the works of the Creator should remain mutilated for all eternity, as if it were beyond His power to preserve it or to restore it to its primitive integrity.

Will this body, then, be so vile that the Omnipotent hands which have formed it will disdain to bring it forth again from the dust? It is beyond all doubt, and we have just declared it, that the body is, by its very nature, considerably inferior to the spiritual soul from which it receives life. But amongst all the material works of God, is there one to equal it? Examine, my brethren, and then decide. The sun dazzles us with its lustre, but does it shine like the eye of man with the fire of genius? and, if I may use the expression, does it send forth the light of intelligence? Can the serenity of the loveliest day bear a comparison with the smile which adorns the human countenance—to that expression of amiable joy, peace, noble modesty, clemency, and benevolence, which sometimes irradiates every feature? Are candour and innocence as legible in the fairest heaven as upon the brow of the just man? The birds delight us with the melody of their notes; but what are all their concerts in comparison with the words of man, and these wonderful accents which express and communicate sentiment and thought—which, while they strike the ear, enlighten the mind, produce a deep emotion in the heart, bring distant objects near, delineate what is invisible, and convert one of the minutest organs of the body into the admirable instrument of a spiritual intercourse between mind and mind! Other animals may be endowed with an equal share of beauty, strength, activity, and grace, but is there one among them all which has received the majestic mien of man, those eyes lifted up to heaven, this commanding attitude, and this dignity, which proclaims him to be the monarch of creation? Oh! my brethren, how glorious must this body have been in the state of its original beauty—when it came forth, for the first time, from the hands of its Creator—resplendent with glory and majesty and bearing upon it the living and unsullied impress of the Divine resemblance—whereas even in the state of degradation to which it has been reduced by sin, it still so far surpasses all that is most perfect in the visible world, and is still the centre around which all things rally—the only material object which is worthy of the affection and love of the Creator—the only one for which all others exist! But our bodies, and not our souls, stand in need of this earth, to support and nourish

them, and this light of heaven to enlighten them, and this air which we breathe, to preserve them. What probability can there be, therefore, that the most beautiful and most perfect of all sensible and corporeal objects—that to which every other object only bears a relation—should enjoy the shortest duration of any? The stars have rolled over our heads for the last six thousand years, without having lost any of their original brightness; the earth, after so many ages, remains unshaken upon its foundation, and preserves its fertility unimpaired; the rivers do not find their springs dried up; the cedars and the aged pine-trees still crown the summits of those mountains where our fathers lived in generations far away; and shall the body of man be like the grass of the field which springs up in the morning, and falls decayed and withered in the evening? Shall he enjoy a few short moments of light and existence, for the mere purpose of being changed at once into a detestable mass of corruption, and to be a prey for ever to putrefaction and worms? Shall his existence not only be shorter than so many other works of God, which have been created for his use alone, but, what is stranger still, shall his existence be of much shorter duration than even the works of his own hands? Whilst the stately monuments, the palaces, and temples, which he has erected, the brass and marble which he has endued, to a certain extent, with animation, by impressing upon them the features of his own resemblance, resist the ravages of time, and will continue to attract the attention of generations in the most distant future, shall he himself be destroyed almost as soon as he begins to exist, and remain buried for ages in that dust out of which he shall never more arise? And shall he have formed images of himself which are less perishable than the model which has been fashioned by the very hands of the Almighty, and marked with the seal of His Divine resemblance?

Moreover, is not the body of him who builds temples to the Deity, who erects altars in His honour, and adorns them with magnificence, the most worthy sanctuary which that Deity can occupy upon this earth? What sanctuary can He prefer to the chaste body which is the habitation of a virtuous and pious soul? What are temples of wood and stone, or even of gold and porphyry, in His eyes, when compared with this living tabernacle which offers Him incense, and honours Him with prayer and adoration? Behold him fall prostrate as if he would annihilate himself in presence of the Sovereign Majesty; behold those lips which cleave to the pavement of the holy place, which kiss it with religious respect; behold

those eyes streaming with tears of devotion which are riveted upon the tabernacle—this heart which throbs with the love of God—these hands which are lifted up to heaven, as if to carry the homage of adoration to the very foot of the throne of the Eternal; listen to the accents of that voice which sings forth His praises with such delightful harmony, and which loudly invites every creature to unite in celebrating His wondrous works.

But, astonishing fact! it is not enough that this body of clay should render so pure a homage to the Author of its being; it must also imitate His virtues, to a certain extent, and be the instrument, the agent, and, as it were, the representative of His bounteous Providence here on earth. Is there any good work which He does not exert Himself in perfecting, or one in which all His members do not co-operate? Is not His heart moved to compassion by the sorrowful tale of misfortune? Is not His arm stretched forth to support or relieve the infirm, to wipe away the tears of the afflicted, to shut up alms in the hearts of the poor? Do not His hands labour to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to smooth the couch of the feeble and infirm? Do not the words of tenderness and consolation—the most salutary and most consoling balm which charity can pour upon the wounds of the heart—issue from His lips? In a word, what benefit has any feeling or generous soul ever conferred upon mankind, without the co-operation of the body, which often contributes the most important assistance? It sometimes exhausts its entire strength, and is altogether consumed in the service of God and his neighbour. And is it possible that God, who is goodness itself, could reward such services, by devoting both soul and body to everlasting destruction? Could He unmercifully form a never-ending separation between the soul and the body which have been so sacredly united for the performance of every duty of piety and mercy? No, no, O Lord! I could never believe it.

Moreover, my brethren, it is true that when sin poisoned the source of all the generations of mankind, and caused its fatal poison to circulate even to the very centre of our being, it provoked the wrath of God against that flesh which He had created in a state of innocence, and which such hideous corruption had defiled in His sight. He could not look upon His work disfigured, and He, therefore, broke it; but, O design worthy of Himself! it was only to reconstruct, upon a more perfect model, what the poison of the serpent had disfigured, and not to destroy what His own wisdom had formed.

How admirable and how Divine are those mysteries which religion presents to the contemplation of faith! A God clothing Himself in human flesh, in order to purify it—suffering death in order to overturn its empire—coming forth victorious from the grave, in order to gain the victory over it for our sakes—making His glorified body become, in its resurrection, the principle, and, as it were, the source of the resurrection of our bodies also—nourishing them with the Holy Eucharist, in order that they may be one and the same as Himself, by an ineffable union—filling them with the very spirit of life, by the abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit which He imparts to them in all the sacraments of the New Law—and when they are about to return to the dust, marking them by extreme unction with the seal of life and immortality. Hence arises the peace with which the Christian goes down to the grave; hence, the respect which we bear to his cold remains, the prayers and ceremonies which render his obsequies so affecting, and which impart an august character to such a melancholy office: hence, the solemn benediction which consecrates the earth prepared to receive him, and the sublime inscription graven on the stone which covers him—"Here reposes a faithful servant who has fallen asleep in the Lord, in the hope of awakening on the last day." Thus it is that God gains a complete victory over hell; thus He re-establishes that work in all its integrity, which the tempter had vainly flattered himself with having destroyed. Man, who is formed after the likeness of the Creator, yields for a moment to death, in order that by a miracle no less wonderful than creation itself, he may rise again to a second life, more glorious than the first; and if we be allowed to compare what is so great with what may seem insignificant, although it deserves our admiration—as the creeping insect which trails upon the slime of this earth, comes forth, clothed with renewed vigour, displaying its brilliant wings, cleaving the air, and resting only upon flowers, after having been released from the confinement of a sepulchre in which it had remained for some time immured in a motionless and almost inanimate state, so also the body of man, which had been at first heavy, carnal, corruptible, subject to a thousand humiliating wants, and resembling the first earthly and sinful Adam in every particular, after having left all that was gross and mortal behind in the grave, shall come forth regenerated, spiritual, impassible, more brilliant, and more pure than the stars in the firmament, and what is still more, transformed into the resemblance of the second heavenly and divine Adam, to become a sharer in his privileges and

immortality. *Reformabit corpus humilitatis nostræ conformatum corpori claritatis suæ.**

This is an economy worthy of God—too great and magnificent to be conceived by another than Himself. Every part of it implies an infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; every part of it proclaims the Eternal Being, the only source of existence, who alone liveth, and is alone unchangeable, because every part of it tends to existence, life, eternity, and immortality. In every other economy I can detect the conceptions of a feeble, contracted intelligence, which has sprung from nonentity, and continues shrouded in darkness, because I see all its plans terminate in nothing, in death, and a never ending night.

Let senseless unbelievers now come forward; and let them advance in opposition to these exalted and Divine reflections—to the imposing authority of all the Scriptures—to the undeniable fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the conclusive inferences which St. Paul deduced from that resurrection—in opposition to all these let them advance—what? I feel ashamed to mention it. It is the imaginary impossibility which must prevent Almighty God from restoring that which is dead to life again—although He has given life to that which had never before existed—and from finding the scattered elements of our bodies in what they term the vast womb of nature—although He has been able to find them in the deep abyss of nothing. They may again and again advance those vain objections, which even pagans would blush to advance, and which they have abandoned; they only deserve our contempt; and it will be sufficient for us to reply that one thing alone is impossible to God—that He should be incapable of performing whatever He pleases, or of fulfilling whatever He has promised: that to suppose it possible for an unlimited power to be thwarted by any obstacle is to reach the utmost limits of absurdity—it is a contradiction in terms; that no one can be justified in denying the resurrection, because it is incomprehensible, unless he can point out, at least, one work of God which he can fully comprehend—unless he can comprehend his own existence, which is an impenetrable mystery; and that, finally, when we every day see learned men who have filched from nature a portion of its secrets, and who decompose material substances before our very eyes—when we see them form new substances from a skilful combination

* "He will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory."—*Phil.* iii. 21.

of these elements, and decompose these substances again, and reconstruct the original substances from these very same elements—it would be most extraordinary that the Sovereign Author of nature should not be able, after the dissolution of our bodies, and the different changes which they must sustain, to collect their scattered elements once more, to rebuild the edifice of our members, and thus to re-establish His original creation.

Oh! how easy it will be for the creative and omnipotent Word to accomplish this miracle! At the sound of the trumpet, that is to say, at the voice of the Son of God, how readily shall the air, the water, the earth, and the deep abyss restore the remains of our bodies which may have been wasted, hidden, evaporated, consumed in a thousand different ways; our ashes and scattered dust shall unite in the twinkling of an eye, and resume the shape in which they had been once embodied; and all those who had been dead shall issue forth alive from their graves, and appear together in presence of the Supreme Arbiter of their destiny, to receive the recompense which their works deserve. *Et dedit mare mortuos; et mors et infernus dederunt mortuos suos: et judicatum est de singulis.**

Such, then, my brethren, will be the consummation of all things, or rather, such will be the beginning of a new order of things which must last for ever. Behold your destiny—you men who are born for immortality—who now hear me. Your soul, that nobler portion of your being, by which you resemble God and His Angels, does not cease to live when the breath of life abandons the body, but it escapes at that moment from its prison, and wings its flight to the region of the living which is its resting-place for all eternity. Your body itself shall not remain for ever swallowed up in that grave to which it is compelled to descend. There it is consumed, but only to disengage itself from every thing corruptible which it had retained, and to qualify itself to receive the undecaying form which it shall one day assume, in the same manner as the gold is dissolved in the furnace, to come forth more pure and brilliant than before. O children of men! how have you forgotten what you are, and what you are destined to become upon a future day? Why should your hearts be weighed down and fastened to this earth which is not your country? When you

* "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged, every one according to their works."—*Apoc.* xx. 13.

have been formed to enjoy such great and substantial benefits —when you have been invited to possess, not the appearance and the shadow, but the substantial reality of unalloyed happiness and true glory—how can you adhere to trifles which deceive you, and to phantoms which vanish from your grasp as you strive to embrace them? *Filii hominum, usquequo gravi corde? ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quæritis mendacium.** Avaricious man! what benefit shall you derive from this treasure of filth which you accumulate at the expense of so many solicitudes and such great sacrifices? What sympathy can exist between this vile metal of which death must soon deprive you, and the immortal spirit which animates you? Alas! with what eternal indigence and destitution must you not expiate this insane passion for perishable riches, upon a future day? *Ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quæritis mendacium?* And you, haughty slave of pride! what is that vapour of glory which you so eagerly desire, but illusion and falsehood? Has it ever afforded you a single moment of real and unalloyed happiness, to compensate for the ignominy and reproach which it will compel you to endure for all eternity? *Ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quæritis mendacium?* But, above all, O voluptuous man! what do you endeavour to obtain in the slime of the most ignominious pleasures? Oh! with what remorse and disgust shall those infamous inclinations lead you to torments without number, to never-ending despair! *Ut quid diligitis vanitatem et quæritis mendacium?* Infatuated mortals! Abandon, oh! abandon those criminal conceits, and direct all your thoughts and all your energies to the attainment of those substantial benefits and those ineffable delights which will be the eternal rewards of the just. *Scitote quoniam mirificavit Dominus sanctum suum.*† Ask not, ye men of little faith! what pledge shall we give you of the exalted destiny which we venture to promise you shall enjoy hereafter. *Multi dicunt quis ostendit nobis bona.*‡ Ah! Lord, can we require any other pledge or security beside that image of Thy greatness which is inwardly impressed upon our souls, and which distinguishes us so gloriously from every object which surrounds us? *Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui Domine.*§ How can I doubt that there is something immortal and divine in my nature when I

* "O, ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying?"—*Ps.* iv. 3.

† "Know ye also that the Lord hath made His holy one wonderful" —*Ps.* iv. 4.

‡ "Many say, who showeth us good things?"—*Ibid.* 6.

§ "The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us."—*Ibid.* 7.

find myself so much superior to all that is not identified with Thyself or that does not bear the character of Thy resemblance—when I feel something insatiable and immense within me which no created object can appease—in comparison with which all that must have an end is nothing—which pervades this visible world on every side—which all finite objects serve only to confine—which can find no rest but in the bosom of infinity, or enjoy no ease or happiness but in Thee alone? *Dedisti lætitiam in corde meo.** Ah! others may feel a pride in the fertility of their fields; they may joyfully gather in their rich harvests and the abundant fruits of the olive and the vine. *A fructu frumenti vini et olei multiplicati sunt;*† but for my part, O my God, whether it may please Thee to give me or to refuse me the gifts of fortune and the short-lived enjoyments of this world, I shall live in peace, contented and happy in Thy love alone. *In pace in idipsum dormiam et requiescam.*‡ The hope of a glorious immortality in Thy kingdom is sufficient to gratify all my wishes and even those desires which are most unbounded. *Quoniam tu, Domine, singulariter in spe constituisti me.*§ That this precious hope, my brethren, may be fulfilled in our regard; that we may be all united together for all eternity in the bosom of our God, is a blessing which I sincerely wish you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

* "Thou hast given gladness in my heart."—*Ps.* iv. 7.

† "By the fruit of their corn, their wine and oil, they are multiplied."—*Ibid.* 8.

‡ "In peace, in the self-same I will sleep and rest."—*Ibid.* 9.

§ "For Thou, O Lord, hast singularly settled me in hope."—*Ibid.* 10.

SERMONS

RELATIVE TO

THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

SERMON ON DEVOTION TO MARY.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN, AND OF THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE.

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord."—*Luke* ii. 22.

THE Church celebrates, upon this day, the Mystery of the Presentation of Jesus Christ in the Temple, together with that of the Purification of Mary. She is pleased, on her most interesting solemnities, thus to unite the Son and the Mother, that we may learn not to separate them in our love, and, that next to the supreme worship of adoration which is due to our Divine Redeemer, nothing should be more precious or more sacred to us than the homage of veneration and respect which is due to the Queen of Virgins. Let us, accordingly, co-operate in the designs of that holy Church which is guided by the Spirit of God: and as we commence the present course of religious instruction, in conformity with an ancient custom, which has been established by the piety of our fathers, on a day so glorious to Mary, let us enter upon it by her praises, and proclaiming her title to the homage which is paid her by the whole Catholic world.

I am well aware that in the present age of impiety and pride, some conceited and short-sighted individuals will be found, even amongst those who nominally belong to the body of the faithful, who disdainfully consign every devotion which has the Mother of God for its object, to the ignorant and credulous portion of the people. It is for this very reason I

feel myself obliged to vindicate that devotion in presence of this august and enlightened assembly, and to show that there is no devotion more solid, more strictly conformable to the dictates of Christianity, or more worthy of great and exalted minds than this devotion to the Mother of God.

My brethren, I do not address the enemies of religion, on the present occasion. Those who blaspheme Jesus Christ Himself, would find it very difficult to comprehend the obligation of honouring His blessed Mother; I address the disciples of the Gospel, the children of the Church, who are ready to believe and to adore; and if there be any of this latter class who have suffered themselves to be deluded by the sophisms of some reckless sceptics, and who may have, therefore, conceived an unwarrantable prejudice against the devotions which we practise, in honour of our blessed Lady, I trust I shall remove all such prejudices by the present discourse, and convince all such persons that they cannot have too great veneration, or too much zeal, for such a holy devotion: first, because it is a devotion which authorities that are most impressive and most sacred in the eyes of faith, oblige them to respect; and, secondly, because it is a devotion which, with motives that are most convincing and serious, even in the eyes of reason, make it an obligation on their part to practise. This is the subject which I shall endeavour to explain at greater length; it is a subject which is identified with all that is most sublime and most affecting in religion; a subject which cannot fail to afford a lively interest to every feeling heart and Christian soul. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—Some querulous censors will ask us, "Why such extraordinary honours are lavished on Mary? or should our zeal for her glory admit of no measure or limitation? that undoubtedly, we ought to honour her for the singular privileges which she has received, and the exalted virtues which she has practised, but is it necessary that our temples should continually resound with her praises, that incense should always burn before her images, and that her name should be combined with all our other prayers? Are there no other grounds for apprehending abuse or excess in all those devotions which are so popular and so multitudinous in our days? Instead of encouraging these devotions from our pulpits, would it not be more judicious to exhibit that reserve and circumspection which are so remarkable in Holy Writ—where, it is said, this Virgin is so little spoken of—the moderation of the Apostles who seem, as it is also asserted, to have observed a marked silence respecting her in their preaching—and the wisdom of the pri-

mitive Church and of the ancient fathers, who, we are assured, have been most moderate in praising her and decreeing public services in her honour, lest the Christian people who had been so recently converted from the errors of paganism, may be influenced by some feeling of superstition, which still lingered amongst them, to attribute a Divine nature to the Mother of a God-made-man?"

It is thus, my brethren, they pretend to encounter us with the authority of the sacred Scriptures, of the first preachers of the Gospel, of the brightest ages of the Church, and of the holy doctors who were its light and glory. But so far from admitting that these sacred and venerable authorities are opposed to us, we shall appeal to them ourselves, and we shall confidently adduce them to demonstrate that the spirit which enlightened the prophets and Apostles, which animated the Church from her very birth, which guided the pens of her wisest and most learned doctors, is the very same spirit as that which, at the present day, inspires this religious respect, this tender piety towards Mary, with which certain individuals feel disposed to reproach us as if it were a weakness on our part.

But, in the first place, how do they endeavour to establish that the sacred Scriptures pay but little regard to the Blessed Virgin? If such be the fact, St. Bernard must have been badly acquainted with them when he believed them to be filled with her praises—when he recognized Mary in the promises which had been made to the patriarchs, in the oracles of the prophets, and in a multitude of mysterious symbols and prodigies which prefigured her—"*Maria patribus olim repromissa -mysticis præfigurata miraculis -oraculis prænunciata Prophetica*"*—when he so confidently assured his hearers that if they read and examine the Scriptures as he had done, they would find Mary pervading them throughout. "*Scrutate Scripturas et proba quæ dico.*"† And in proof of this, my brethren, if we open the most ancient of the sacred books—that which records the wonders of creation, and the origin of the human race and of religion, along with that of the world—what shall we find at the very first page? The fatal transgression of the first progenitors of mankind, who were seduced by the old serpent; and immediately after, the great and solemn promise of a Redeemer to come, which promise has been the consolation and the only hope of the unhappy posterity of Adam. Now, I ask you, in

* Sermon within the Octave of the Assumption.
† Homily 2.

what terms is that promise expressed? Is Mary forgotten in it? Listen, I pray you. *The Lord God said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this thing**—because thou hast introduced sin into the world, by means of a woman—*I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.*† She will bring forth a Son who will be the terror of thy race, and the destroyer of thy empire. She shall at length disarm thee of all thy poison; *she shall crush thy head.*‡ You perceive, my brethren, in the first oracle which came forth from the lips of God Himself—in that which is the foundation of all religion—that of which all the other prophecies are nothing more than its fulfilment—how Mary is announced and solemnly promised to the world in conjunction with Jesus Christ. She appears along with Him *in the head of the Book*§ of Divine Revelation; she is described in the most touching and most glowing colours, as the mother of the Redeemer to come, and as the victorious queen who was destined to trample all the powers of darkness beneath her feet. It is thus she has been held forth four thousand years before her birth, to the hopes and desires as well as to the veneration and love of all mankind.

Let us next listen to Isaias, still more recently, predicting that great event to which the salvation of the world is attached. What does this prophet behold? What is the prodigy which fills him with amazement—that prodigy to which he invites all the attention of the house of David‖—that sign which God should give to His people, which should manifest His power to its fullest extent.¶ That sign, that prodigy, my brethren, is no other than Mary. It is Mary, and her fruitful virginity—Mary and her Divine maternity. *Hear ye, therefore, O house of David. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel***—*which being interpreted, is God with us.*†† She shall be a Virgin, and the mother of a God at the same time. *Ecce virgo concipiet, et pariet filium, et vocabitur nomen ejus Emmanuel.*

All the prophecies are filled with the magnificent figures under which the Holy Spirit represents Mary. She is the precious *rod out of the root of Jesse,*‡‡ out of which the Messiah shall rise up as a Divine flower—the land of benediction upon which the heavens drop down dew, and which buds forth a Saviour.§§ She is the chaste and only spouse‖‖—the object of

* *Gen.* iii. 14. † *Ibid.* 15. ‡ *Ibid.* § *Ps.* xxxix. 8; *Heb.* x. 7.
‖ *Isai.* vii. 13. ¶ *Ibid.* 14. ** *Ibid.* †† *Matt.* i. 23.
‡‡ *Isai.* xi. 1. §§ *Ibid* xlv. 8. ‖‖ *Cant.* iv. 9.

the ineffable love of her God—the glorious queen, whom the Angels behold with delight, as she stands at the right hand * of her Son whom they all adore.

But independently of the figures and predictions of the old law, let us see whether the Gospel does not suggest equally sublime ideas of this Virgin. Read that Gospel, my brethren, and tell me what must we think of a mortal to whom the God of the universe sends a solemn embassy from the highest heavens† —a mortal whom the messenger of Heaven accosts with reverence, and contemplates with admiration, and humbles himself in her presence when he says: *Hail full of grace!*‡— thou in whom the God of majesty abideth: *the Lord is with thee*—thou whom He has chosen out of the midst of all the daughters of Adam to be the object of His most special benedictions; *blessed art thou among women.* What extraordinary praise this is! And it comes from the lips of an Angel. What must we think of a mortal who, by the power of the Most High which overshadowed her, and by the omnipotent operation of the Holy Spirit within her, has conceived the Word made flesh, in her chaste womb, and brought forth the Son of the Eternal, who is her Son also. O incomprehensible mystery! O unparalleled dignity of Mary! But, if we examine still further, what do we read? That, at the mere sound of her voice, the Spirit of God was poured forth like a torrent, all around her; that it filled Elizabeth with the wisdom of prophecy, and extending even to the infant whom she bore in her womb, it caused him to leap with a heavenly joy.§ Who has ever heard of any prodigies that can be compared with these? But what seems to me no less striking than all this is, the testimony which this humble Virgin gives in her own behalf, when she exclaims in transports of gratitude, that the Lord had done great and wonderful things to her: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.*‖ That, by the magnificence of His promises He has been pleased to point her out from the origin of ages, to the faith and reverence of the patriarchs and ancient just: *Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros,*¶ and that now, through the excess of His favours, He presents her to receive the homage of all future generations, who shall never cease to style her blessed. *Ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*** This, my brethren, is only a portion of that picture which the Church presents to us. And is this to take no notice of the greatness of Mary?

* *Ps.* xliv. 10. † *Luke* i. 26, 27. ‡ *Ibid* 28. § *Luke* i. 44.
‖ *Ibid.* i. 49. ¶ *Ibid.* i. 55. ** *Ibid.* 48.

It is also asserted that the Apostles were studiously silent in their preaching respecting the Blessed Virgin. But is such the fact? Whilst the evangelists have proclaimed so many wonderful things respecting her, could the Apostles have made it a rule not even to speak of her? Who could acknowledge that so strange a contradiction at all exists? Have we nothing to determine the truth except argument and conjecture? Have we not the most authentic record of the doctrines which the Apostles taught in that creed which they have drawn up with their own hands, which still bears their name, and which we daily repeat? In this brief exposition of the fundamental principles of Christianity they could not include every doctrine; and more than one great mystery, more than one important dogma has been omitted; but does such an omission exist with respect to Mary? Are her august prerogatives forgotten there? Has there been no place for Mary in the creed of the Apostles? O my brethren! what a position does she occupy there! who could refrain from being filled with amazement at beholding it? In that creed her name is combined with the adorable names of the three Divine Persons. She appears there in the midst of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not as a stranger among them, but united to them by the closest and most indissoluble alliance—in the capacity of a daughter, a spouse, and a mother. Do I exaggerate, my brethren? Judge for yourselves, and reflect attentively, for once, upon those words which you have perhaps often carelessly repeated. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary;"—that is to say, I believe in a God begotten by a God and born of Mary—the only Son of the Most High, and the real Son of Mary—consubstantial with the Eternal Father, and formed from the substance of Mary—conceived by the Holy Ghost, and conceived and born of Mary. O ineffable union and relationship! O amazing affinity between a mere creature and the great Creator! O elevation, in comparison with which all the glory of the blessed and the Angels fade away into utter insignificance! A God in three persons, a Man-God, and Mary His Mother;—this is the substance of the whole creed; this is what the Apostles taught; this is what they explained more at length in their divine preaching. My brethren, this is not to praise and honour Mary; it is not only to propose her to the most profound veneration of the faithful, but it is to elevate her above all honour, above all praise, above all conception; and I do not hesitate to assert that, in comparison with these expressions of the sacred formula of our faith,

all the efforts of human eloquence which are made to exalt this incomparable Virgin, all our praises and panegyrics, with all their supposed exaggeration, are nothing more than the feeble language of impotent admiration, which cannot ascend the eminence upon which Mary is placed.

We are also assured that the Church of primitive ages felt it a duty to observe moderation and reserve in the praises which she bestowed upon Mary, lest a creature so highly privileged and so holy may be confounded with the Deity in those days when the minds of men were still imbued with pagan superstition. If such had been the case, my brethren—admitting even that such a precaution had been necessary in those days—such necessity ceased to exist very soon after, when paganism and its errors had disappeared before the light of the Gospel? But, is it true that the Church, even at its origin, has been so reserved, as it is asserted, in exhibiting its piety towards the Mother of God? To answer this question we must appeal to facts; and because the limits of a discourse will not allow us to refer to all those which we could adduce, we shall select one illustrious fact in the history of ancient times, which may serve as a criterion of all the others, which, as it were, concentrates all the primitive traditions, and shows, at a glance what the sentiments of the clergy, and faithful of the east and west, of the pastors, doctors, supreme pontiffs, and councils have been with regard to the Blessed Virgin, and the veneration which is due to her.

Towards the close of the fourth century, Nestorius had ascended the see of Constantinople; and, as his faith had not been suspected, he governed that immense flock in peace, which Gregory of Nazianzen and Chrysostom had nourished with the milk of the most holy doctrine. But the heresiarch, disguised in sheep's clothing, suddenly disclosed himself from the summit of the Episcopal throne; and, in the temple of the Lord, Nestorius gave utterance to these remarkable words: "We should not say that Mary is the Mother of God, lest we may seem to make a goddess of that Virgin: by doing so, we would justify the practice of the pagans who give mothers to their gods." At these words, his faithful hearers, who could not be deceived by the hypocrisy of such language, brake forth into murmurs of disapprobation; a courageous voice openly accuses the impious bishop of blasphemy; priests and people rush forth in a crowd from the holy place, and the flock abandon their pastor; Constantinople is filled by as much agitation and alarm, as if it had been assailed by some public calamity. The report of the insult offered to Mary soon spreads far and wide,

and the whole Christian world is set in commotion. Africa led on by the great Cyril of Alexandria, sends forth a cry of indignation: Asia and Europe repeat the cry; the holy Pope Celestine convenes the bishops of Italy, and at their head condemns the growing heresy with its author; a general council is convened at Ephesus; the heads of the Churches crowd to it from every side: and, in that council—in the famous basilica, which bore the name of Saint Mary, even then—two hundred bishops, headed by the legates of the Holy See—the representatives of the whole Catholic Church—invoking the doctrine of all their predecessors from the days of the apostles—pronounce an anathema and sentence of deposition against the daring innovator who had so presumptuously sought to diminish the glory of the mother of God. The assembly did not separate until the night was far advanced: but, O, zeal! O, ardent faith of those primitive times, the whole people continued to watch at the gates of the basilica, waiting to hear that judgment pronounced, in which they seemed to feel that the interests of all religion were involved. Scarce had the victory of Mary been proclaimed when the city resounded with shouts of applause and hymns of thanksgiving; the fathers of the council were conducted to their homes in triumph; perfumes were burned on the way before them; innumerable fires and lighted torches testified the universal joy, and gave this memorable night the lustre of a brilliant day. The anathema passed against Nestorius was immediately repeated by all the Churches of Christendom, as it has been ever since repeated in all ages. Magnificent temples were erected and dedicated under the invocation of the Mother of God; the festivals which had been already celebrated in her honour became still more numerous; and devotion towards her became the distinctive character of true believers. Such, my brethren, are the examples of this sacred and venerable antiquity. I ask you now whether the worship which we render to Mary is a puerile and a new devotion?

To make you still more sensible of the excellence of this devotion, I could adduce what has been said upon the subject by the most ancient fathers—those pious and learned men whom paganism admired, before whom heresies turned pale, and who are venerated by the whole Catholic world—such as Irenæus, Basil, Ephrem, Epiphanius, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose. But we shall, to a certain extent, give expression to the sentiments of every one of them, and enable you to hear the voice of the ancient priesthood and hierarchy, by repeating the words which have been uttered in the council of Ephesus,

with the unanimous applause of all the fathers of that council, by the illustrious patriarch of Alexandria, Saint Cyril, who was the soul of that august assembly. Addressing Mary in the presence and in the name of so many prelates, he exclaimed: "We hail thee, O Virgin Mother, living and immortal temple of the Divinity, treasure and light of the world, inextinguishable lamp, glory of virginity, sceptre of orthodox faith, firm support of all the Churches, who brought forth a God, and contained within thy chaste womb Him whom no place can possibly contain, through whom the Holy Trinity is adored and glorified, through whom the precious cross is venerated throughout the whole world, through whom Angels and Archangels rejoice, through whose victorious aid the tempting spirits which have been banished from heaven fly before the Christian, through whom fallen man is restored to the inheritance which he had forfeited, through whom idolatry has been destroyed and the universe converted, through whom the prophets have foretold, through whom he that cometh in the name of the Lord is styled blessed in the holy Gospel, through whom the Apostles have preached salvation to the nations of the earth, through whom kings reign, through whom the dead are raised to life, through whom the only begotten Son of God has shone upon those who were seated in darkness and in the shadow of death." And he adds, as if transported beyond himself, "Who is able to bestow suitable praises upon her who is above all praise? O virginal womb! O incomprehensible miracle, the mere thought of which fills me with astonishment! You," he says, addressing Nestorius, "have employed cavillings against God Himself; but, for our part, let us believe and reverence; let us adore and fear the undivided Trinity, and let us venerate the ever blessed Virgin Mary and her immaculate Son, to whom be all honour and glory for ever and ever." My brethren, were you able to conceive it possible to elevate the pre-eminence, the privileges, and the power of Mary to such a height? These are not only the words of one of the most learned and illustrious amongst the ancient fathers, but they are also words which have been consecrated by the solemn approbation of one of the first ecumenical councils, and inserted in its acts in which we still read them, and preserve the blessed treasure in the archives of the Catholic Church. After them we need not refer to John Damascene, Ildefonsus, Anselm, and Bernard, who have not been able to exceed what this discourse contains, although they have written entire volumes in praise of this glorious Virgin; and let us blush, not at the excess, but at the reserve, of

our praises, which are altogether so far from equalling those few words of the great Cyril.

But why need we dwell so much upon the records and the monuments of distant ages? Is the Church, in our own days, less assisted by the Holy Spirit, less infallible in her doctrine and worship, than she had been in the days of old? Is she not rather one and the same Church at all times, perpetuating herself with every age, and equally incapable of error at all times? Who can conceal her zeal for the glory of Mary from himself at the present day? Reckon, if you can, the prayers and the supplications which she addresses to the Blessed Virgin in every part of the Liturgy, the festivals instituted in her honour, the temples and the altars which have been consecrated to her name in every part of the universe, the graces and favours which she lavishes upon those who are specially devoted to her honour.

Observe, then, my brethren what sacred and imposing authorities are combined to recommend devotion to the Mother of God to your veneration. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the prophets and the Apostles of the primitive and latter times, councils and holy fathers, supreme pontiffs, and the whole Catholic hierarchy are unanimous on this subject, and unite in the same harmony in advocacy of such a salutary and sacred devotion. Those who despise that devotion, who, upon frivolous pretexts, deter the faithful from practising it, who affect to believe with Nestorius that the society of true and sincere adorers of whom Jesus Christ is the head, must fall into a gross idolatry by honouring His mother, cannot therefore rank themselves as children of that Church which they calumniate, or invoke to their aid those sacred Scriptures which they contradict, or rely upon tradition or antiquity which condemns them, or escape behind whatever veil they use to disguise or conceal themselves from the well-merited reproach of irreligion and temerity. The illustrious bishop of Meaux, who is above the suspicion of a weak and superstitious intellect, concludes an instruction upon the same subject as that which I now treat, in the following remarkable words; and when you hear them, my brethren, bear in mind that they are not my words, but the words of that great luminary of the Church of France. "Accordingly," he says, "since devotion to the Blessed Virgin is established upon such a solid basis, anathema to him who denies it, and who deprives Christians of such powerful aid, for he weakens piety in the human heart." How awful is this sentence, my brethren! Let us, therefore, who are not disposed to bring down malediction

upon our heads, redouble our veneration and zeal for a devotion which authorities that are most impressive and most sacred in the eye of faith oblige us to respect, as you have now seen—a devotion which motives that are most convincing and serious, even in the eyes of reason, make it an obligation to practise, as I shall now demonstrate.

II. My dear friends, I do not mean to assert that the feeble reason of man, by its own power, and without the help of faith, could be able to elevate itself to the knowledge of those mysteries which are the foundation of the greatness and prerogatives of Mary: but those principles being once ascertained, and the principles of faith being supposed, I maintain that the enlightened reason of the Christian can feel no difficulty in comprehending the force and the solidity of those motives which oblige us to honour this incomparable Virgin.

The first of these motives is a motive of justice deduced from the singular dignity and the unparalleled elevation of Mary. God alone is great, and to Him alone essentially belong all honour and glory;* but that great God has been pleased to glorify His creatures who have been formed to His own image and likeness; and it is His divine will that they should be revered in proportion as he elevates them and brings them to a certain extent near Himself, and imparts to them some share of His greatness, His sanctity, or His power. Hence the precept of rendering honour to whom honour is due;† hence the sacred obligation of respecting and honouring kings, in virtue of the supremacy of their dignity;‡ and because they are the ministers of God upon earth, the representatives of His majesty and the depositories of His supreme authority amongst mankind.§ Hence, also, the honour which we pay to the saints as the friends of God, and to the Angels, as the ministers of His will, and His ambassadors in our regard. And if such be the privileges which confer upon mere creatures the titles of friends, and ambassadors, and representatives of God, how great must be the prerogatives of a creature who has been favoured with privileges beyond all others—who, in virtue of singular favour, such as no tongue can express, has been chosen as the Mother of this self-same God—who has conceived a man-God in her womb, and produced Him from her most pure blood—who has borne Him in her arms, and nourished Him from her breast—who, by virtue of a mother's authority, has been able to command Him and found Him a submissive and

* 1 *Tim.* i. 17.
† *Rom.* xiii. 7.
‡ 1 *Peter* ii. 13.
§ *Rom.* xiii. 4.

respectful Son in every respect? I must confess, my brethren, that these are miracles which far surpass our understanding, and that these wonderful relations between an infant-God, who obeys the commands of a mortal mother, contain something calculated to confound all the conceptions of the human intellect; but it is no less certain that such relations are a necessary consequence of the fundamental mystery of the Christian faith—the Incarnation of the Word; and that when He, who, in virtue of His Divinity, is infinitely above all created nature, and above every law, has assumed our nature within the womb of a Virgin, He has imposed upon Himself the natural obligation of honouring her from whom He has been pleased to derive existence, as a son should honour his mother. This was an obligation which He could not fail to accomplish in its fullest extent, as He had come to fulfil all justice, and to give us an example of the most perfect fulfilment of every law. In proportion, therefore, as the elevation which results from this obedience is amazing and incomprehensible to our reason, that very reason proclaims it to be just that we should honour her whom the man God, who is our model and our Master, has made it a duty for Himself to honour and obey. Moreover, as these sacred relations are indissoluble and eternal—for it will be true to say for all eternity that the Son of God is the Son of Mary—the glory with which He crowns her in that capacity is not transient but eternal; and it is His will that she should be glorified by the saints and Angels in heaven for all eternity. How, then, could the Church militant and journeying upon this earth, that Church which finds all her consolation in repeating in her exile the hymns of the immortal Sion, refuse in this particular alone, when the mother of her spouse is concerned, to unite her voice to that of the Church triumphant, her sister, and to bear a part in the concerts of the heavenly country? Oh! no, my brethren. The harmony is perfect; heaven and earth join in the same glorious harmony, and emulate each other in singing forth the praises of her who is united by ties of so close an union to that Saviour whom they adore. *Filiæ beatissimam prædicaverunt et reginæ laudaverunt eam.**

Who are they who endeavour to disturb such a delightful harmony by telling us that God feels offended by the homage that is shown to a pure creature—that He beholds it with an eye of indignation and jealousy? O error! O inconceivable

* "The daughters declared her most blessed; the queens praised her."—*Cant.* vi. 8.

blindness! What, O Lord! Thou who dost command us in the Scriptures to honour the memory of the just, and to show forth their praise in the assembly of the faithful;* Thou who dost promise to bless those that bless Thy servants, and to curse those that curse them;† Thou who dost invest Thy saints with such glory and majesty as makes them venerable to kings and people;‡ couldst Thou be offended by the marks of respect which we exhibit towards Thy Mother? Shall we not be allowed to unite ourselves with the woman in the Gospel in blessing the womb that bore Thee, and the breasts that gave Thee suck;§ or to join with the Angel in his humble salutation of that Virgin *full of grace*, who is now in the full enjoyment of heavenly glory; or to declare with Elizabeth that she is blessed and happy amongst the daughters of Adam, or to combine with our profound adoration of Thee, the testimony of our religious veneration for her who has given birth to Thee, and without whom we could not know Thee? O Lord! to whom is all the veneration which we manifest towards her ultimately referred but to Thyself alone? What do we revere in her but the living image of Thy Divine perfections which Thou hast formed in her! What do we praise in her but the excellence of Thy gifts and graces? What lays us prostrate at her feet but the close relation and the ineffable ties which bind her inseparably to Thee? So far from fearing that Thou shouldst be jealous of such homage, we feel, on the contrary, that we insult Thee by withholding them from her. If mortal kings deservedly require that reverence should be paid to their relatives and parents, why shouldst Thou, immortal King of ages! require that they should be also paid to her who has given birth to Thee! And if, as Thou Thyself teachest, to be wanting in regard for even the least of Thy elect is to touch the apple of Thy eye,¶ must not the smallest indication of indifference or contempt towards Thy mother wound Thy very heart in its tenderest part?

I have said enough, my dear friends, respecting the first of these motives which should induce us to honour Mary, and which I have termed a motive of justice. The second is a motive of love.

Without stating all the claims which the most perfect and, therefore, the most beloved amongst all creatures possesses upon our love, there are two in particular which should most deeply affect our hearts. She is our great benefactress; she

* *Eccles.* xliv. 15. † *Gen.* xii. 3. ‡ *Eccles.* xlv. 3.
§ *Luke* xi. 27. ‖ *Luke* i 28. ¶ *Zach.* ii. 8.

is our true mother. To speak of her favours, in the first place, it is enough to say that they are immense. Must we not confess that they are, in a certain sense, infinite? To whom are we indebted for all the blessings which we have received except to our Divine Redeemer, who, seeing the wretched posterity of Adam which had been deprived of all its privileges, sunk in crime, and in the disgrace of a guilty father, consigned to eternal woe without the least hope of recovery, has offered Himself for our sakes to the justice of an enraged God, and, by taking our punishment upon Himself, has restored us to life, and hope, and salvation? Now, is it not Mary that has been the next after God in giving us this Redeemer to whom we are indebted for every thing? With what truth may it not then be said, *how hath she not also with Him given us all things?** By conceiving Him within her womb and bringing Him forth to the world, she has conceived grace and brought forth mercy, and caused a torrent of Divine blessings to flow throughout the earth. Yes, every thing comes to us from Mary since every thing comes to us from Jesus. That precious blood which has flowed upon the cross for the expiation of our sins, and which we still drink every day from the chalice of salvation—that blood of the new and everlasting covenant has first flowed from the heart and from the veins of Mary. That adorable flesh which has been torn and sacrificed for us upon Calvary, and which has become the living bread of our souls and the source of the future resurrection of our bodies, is a portion of the flesh and of the womb of Mary. The ineffable union of the Divinity with our weak nature, by which God has humbled Himself to the level of man, and man has been elevated to the God-head, was formed in the chaste womb of Mary, which has thus become the sanctuary where the reconciliation between heaven and earth was wrought.

We must then openly declare—and let our gratitude proclaim such an astonishing miracle—that the favour for which we are indebted to Mary is the stupendous favour of God Himself, the mystery of the redemption of man, of which she has not been the blind instrument, but in which she has been the free and voluntary co-operator. Our redemption, our salvation was effected at the very moment when that glorious Virgin gave a consent of which men and Angels, and even God Himself waited in expectation—when she pronounced that humble but efficacious sentence—MAY IT BE DONE TO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD.† From that time forward we ob-

* *Rom.* viii. 32. † *Luke* i. 38.

tained a liberator; hell was conquered and heaven laid open to our hopes; a man-God came into existence and all the designs of an infinite mercy were accomplished. I ask you, after all this, how can that which all other creatures put together have done for our salvation, be compared with all that Mary has effected for it? The prophets have foretold the coming of our Saviour; the Angels have celebrated His birth; the holy precursor has pointed Him out to the world; the Apostles and evangelists have made Him known to all the nations: the ministers of the Church, in every age, have preached His word, and been the dispensers of His sacraments and mysteries; but Mary has produced this very Saviour from her own substance; she has nourished Him and supported Him, to be our victim, with such a degree of care as no language can express, and entering into the love of the Father for mankind, *who hath not spared even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.** She has consented to His death as it became necessary for us: and silent at the foot of the cross, her heart pierced with a sword of grief, she has offered Him in sacrifice for our sakes. Such, my dear friends, is the part which she has borne in the great work of our redemption. This is what all the holy fathers have asserted—what made Irenæus declare that Eve had caused the ruin of the human race, but that Mary had saved it—and St. Augustine, that a woman had been the cause of death, but that a woman had restored us to life—and Tertullian, that we had been released from the abyss by the very sex which had been the cause of our falling into it. And what else is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit Himself, when He announces from the very beginning of the world that the woman would crush the head of the serpent†—by which He indicates that she would destroy all the powers of hell? Such are the favours which are conferred upon us by this august Virgin, and shall we make no return for them but the blackest ingratitude? And should it not be a part of our religion to exhibit our gratitude and love for her to whom we owe, in the language of St. Cyril, both religion itself, and all the knowledge of the true God, and all the privileges of the Divine adoption with Jesus Christ! And this last expression reminds me that Mary is not only our great benefactress, but that she is also our true mother.

Yes, my dear friends, the very adoption which has made us children of God has also made us children of Mary. Allow me to explain this profound and affecting mystery in a few

* *Rom.* viii. 32. † *Gen.* iii. 15.

words—to point out to you, who are great in the eyes of the world, the foundations of a more solid greatness, of a more exalted nobility, than could possibly be derived from a long line of ancestors, and from the most illustrious birth. By the wonderful effect of the incarnation of the Word in the womb of a Virgin, He who was for all eternity *the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father*,* has become, in time, *the first born amongst many brethren*.† Christians! we ourselves are the happy brethren of this incarnate Deity; and He Himself has styled us by this glorious and consoling title. *Vade ad fratres meos*.‡ For Jesus Christ being no less the Son of Mary, by His human nature, no less than He is the Son of the Most High by His Divine nature, we would be His brothers only by half if we were not associated in this two-fold, this Divine and human filiation—if we had not, in our capacity as Christians, the same Father and the same Mother as Himself. He has, accordingly, been pleased to leave no doubt upon that subject; for, before He ascended into heaven, He said to us, in the person of His first disciples, *I ascend to My Father and your Father*.§ And before His death, He also said to us, in the person of His beloved disciple, *Behold thy mother*.‖ Oh, affecting expression! And shall we disown that mother whom our expiring Saviour has given us—that divine mother whom heaven rejoices in having as its queen—that tender mother, who is not content with having us her children, but who, in the very hour of her most bitter anguish upon Calvary, has brought us forth in an ineffable manner, by charity in the blood and death of her first-born who was sacrificed as a holocaust for our sakes? Ah, my dear friends, if we do not wish to have Mary for our mother, take care that we may not be the brethren of Jesus Christ, nor consequently the heirs of His kingdom destined for eternal life; for Mary is the only true mother of all the elect.¶ But, on the other hand, how absurd and outrageous it is, while we acknowledge her as our mother, to refuse her the reverence and love which are due to her, to affect an odious indifference in her regard, and to remain strangers to that worship which the filial piety of Christians decrees in her honour! Oh, happy, a thousand times happy they who love this mother of mercy. What consolation shall they enjoy in invoking and praising her. What delightful beauty will they not discover in the contemplation of her virtues; but above all, what precious advantage will they not

* *John* i. 18 † *Rom.* viii. 27. ‡ "Go to my brethren."—*John* xx. 17.
§ *John* xx. 17. ‖ *John* xix. 27. ¶ *Gen.* iii. 20.

derive from her intercession, which becomes the channel of all graces, and the inexhaustible source of every good in their regard. So that if justice, gratitude, and love were not sufficiently powerful motives, our very interest would be sufficient to induce us to honour her. And this is the last motive which I shall propose for your consideration.

Being frail, and at the same time immortal creatures, we have interests of a two-fold character—those of time, which end with the present life, and those of eternity, which last as long as God Himself. To begin with the latter, it is the constant doctrine of the saints that we cannot be saved without the assistance of Mary. St. Bernard says, that God having placed the whole treasure of our redemption, and the plenitude of all good, in the womb of this Blessed Virgin; if we possess any hope, or grace, or salvation, it comes to us through her! "*Si quid spei in nobis est, si quid gratiæ, si quid salutis, ab ea noverimus redundare.*" St. Anselm does not hesitate to affirm, that whosoever is abandoned by Mary must inevitably perish. "*Necesse est ut pereat.*" Some of them represent her to be the only dispenser of the treasures of Jesus Christ; others as the most necessary mediator, next to our Divine Mediator. But what can be added to the beautiful expression of St. Epiphanius, who styles her the common mercy seat of the world. —"*Communne mundi propitiatorium.*" The great Bishop of Meaux, therefore, only repeats the language of all tradition, when he makes use of this striking observation—"That by virtue of an immutable decree of Divine wisdom Mary shall contribute, during all eternity, to every observation of grace for the salvation of mankind." And hence it is the doctrine, not of a few enthusiastic panegyrists, but of the gravest and most learned doctors, as well as of the greatest saints, that she perpetually co-operates in our salvation, and that grace can operate nothing in us without her aid. Let you, therefore, who do not wish to perish, and who aspire to eternal happiness, invoke her intercession. Ye just and fervent souls, invoke Mary, that she may sustain you in the narrow and difficult path of justice, and that ascending from virtue to virtue, you may, at length, arrive at the summit of that holy mountain where God shall crown His elect. Ye tepid and imperfect souls who drag on the yoke of the Lord so remissly, invoke Mary, that she may hasten to revive your languor, before God shall reject you altogether out of His mouth—before your heart having grown weary and disgusted from a piety which is without pleasure or consolation, because it is destitute of all fidelity or love, should feel no compunction at the pleasure of

guilt, and, as the Scriptures express it, should return back to its vomit. And you sinners, who, buried in the abyss of the most shameful disorders, feel how dreadful your condition is, but despair of being able to release yourselves from it—you who no longer believe it possible to break such oppressive chains, and to overcome such inveterate habits—have recourse to Mary. With her assistance nothing will be impossible; the darkness which besets you will be dissipated; vice will lose the deceitful charms which have so shamefully seduced you—virtue will make you feel attractions far more powerful and pleasing; and you will find, in a purer morality, a peace and happiness which your passions could not give. And even you yourself, infidel, whose loss may seem inevitable, as you are in open war with heaven—if you have any compassion for yourself—if you sometimes cannot refrain from shuddering at the thought of the tremendous alternative in which you are placed, and of that dreadful problem which death shall solve at last; and if you have not abandoned all desire of taking proper steps against an eternal misery—let you also look to Mary, and in the midst of your bitter perplexity do not hesitate to say to her, "O Virgin! of whom so many wonderful things have been related, if it be true that thou hast such great influence with God, and that He does not reject any one of your demands; if it be true that salvation can only be had in the faith of the Christians, and that infidelity is a deplorable error which leads to an eternity of despair, obtain for me the favour that a ray of that Divine faith which has been so long extinguished in my heart, may shine upon it once more, and make me find the way out of which I can only suffer perdition and woe; I will perceive by that sign, that you have heard my prayers; I will direct my steps by that light, and when, at length, returned from my wanderings, I will never forget that it is to thee I am indebted for the most signal favours." Oh! infidel, make the experiment; and feeble as that prayer must be, I venture to assure you that if it be accompanied by sincerity it will not be unavailing; and that, perhaps, you may belong to the number of these fortunate infidels, who, moved by a victorious grace and extricated as it by a miracle from the chaos of all error, pass from the shadow of death to the regions of light and life.

It is thus this Blessed Virgin assists us in all the necessities of our souls; but does not this queen of heaven also vouchsafe to feel an interest in our earthly and perishable concerns? Ah! she is our mother, and nothing which concerns her children can

be uninteresting to her. Her solicitude, like that of our Heavenly Father, extends to all our necessities, that she may relieve them; to all our dangers, that she may avert them; to all our affections, that she may console them; to all our lawful projects and concerns, that she may promote their success, as far as our real service may demand or permit. Need I enter into a lengthened detail or facts, in order to demonstrate what I advance. Read the histories of by-gone times and the annals of the Church, my brethren—read them, and you will see scourges averted, storms calmed, the sick healed, the dead raised to life, hostile armies overcome, and cities and kingdoms saved by the protection of Mary. Pass through this great metropolis and through the provinces of this kingdom; behold the immense number of temples and sanctuaries dedicated under her name in the cities and country towns, on the sea shore and cliffs which surround it, in the depths of valleys and on the tops of mountains; inquire why they have been erected; and you will learn that every one of them is a monument of some remarkable favour obtained through the intercession of Mary, or some remarkable prodigy effected through her influence. Tell me the names of those numerous festivals which have been instituted in her honour, and which fill up the whole course of the year—those festivals in which she is invoked under so many various denominations as the dispenser of victory, as the arbitress of peace, as the queen of mercy, as the certain refuge in all our necessities—and I will show you that they are so many solemn attestations of the gratitude of the whole Catholic world on behalf of Christianity which has been so often miraculously delivered, or of the assaults of the barbarians, or of the oppression of the Mussulman, or of schisms, and factions, and intestine wars which desolated the Church, or other extreme calamities which threatened to destroy it. Have we not lately enjoyed the consolation of seeing a new festival, under the title of our Lady-helper, established by the holy Apostolic See, to give thanks to Mary for that memorable and miraculous restoration which has extricated Europe from the abyss into which it had been flung by the most awful revolution which had ever befallen it?

O France! how happy must thou be in having been solemnly placed, three centuries ago, by one of thy pious monarchs—the child of St. Louis—under the special protection of that glorious patroness! O Mary! protect this eldest daughter of the Church, which has preserved the sacred deposit of the true faith unadulterated, during the last fourteen

hundred years—which has long been the land of saints, as she has always been the land of heroes—which, even in our own days, has been deluged by the blood of so many martyrs—and which, alas! has not yet repaired all its ruins, or healed all its wounds. May we speedily behold discord banished and morality respected throughout the land, infidelity and licentiousness driven back to hell, and the hearts of all united in the love of that God who so abundantly rewards the fidelity of his people! *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE GREATNESS OF MARY.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"He that is mighty hath done great things to me."—*Luke* i. 49.

MAN was great and glorious in his primitive state, because he had been united to God, and endued with immortality. These two privileges, which had been attached to innocence, were lost along with innocence itself, and all the true greatness of man vanished from that moment. God, enraged at his revolt and pride, regarded nothing but his meanness and his nothingness; He remembered that He had formed man out of the slime of the earth, and to oblige that man to be mindful of his nature and origin, He compelled him to return by death to that dust out of which He had produced him. This was enough to convince sinful man that he could be great by humility and repentance alone, upon this land which had become his prison and his grave; and that if he were allowed to seek after glory it would only be in a better world, after the Divine justice had been satisfied, and mercy had raised him up from his deplorable fall, he would be once more invested with that immortality of which his disobedience had deprived him. Hence, sin having destroyed that first covenant, the conditions of which had been so glorious—"Be obedient to thy Creator, and be happy; and enjoy thy dignity from the present moment"—a second and a very different covenant was substituted in its place—"Be humble, during the days of expiation and sorrow by which thy mortal life is composed, and leave thy hopes of elevation and greatness to be enjoyed after death, when time shall be no more."

It would seem that the Divine mediator of the new alliance—

who, so far from being a sinner Himself, was the Saint of saints, and the expiation of sin—ought to be exempt from such a rigorous law. But no. By the very fact of His becoming flesh He was compelled to undergo the sentence which has been passed against all flesh: He shall merit glory by ignominy; and, because He ought to be raised infinitely above all other men in the kingdom of His Father, He, of all other men, will be most deeply deluged with humiliations in this land of exile and probation. *Hoc oportuit pati Christum et ita intrare per gloriam suam.** Hence it followed, by a necessary consequence, that she who, among all creatures, was united to this adorable Saviour by the closest ties—who approached the nearest to His incomparable sanctity—who was destined to occupy the highest place next to Him in His eternal dwelling—should bear a greater part in His ignominy than any other child of Adam; and that her humiliations, like those of her Son, should be proportioned to her subsequent glory.

She perfectly comprehended this herself: and although such a condition seemed revolting to nature, she submitted to it without the least reluctance; she entered, without hesitation, into the profound and rigorous designs of Providence in her regard; and, accordingly, whilst Angels and men spoke of her sublime dignity, and of the wonderful miracles which Heaven had wrought in her behalf, she could only speak of her lowliness, and seem desirous of burying herself in the very depths of annihilation. When a prince of the heavenly host saluted her as the spouse of the Holy Spirit, and the Mother of the immortal King of ages—when he styled her full of grace, and blessed amongst all women, at first she was only able to listen in silence to words that were too flattering not to agitate and confound her: *Turbata est in sermone ejus*;† and she could only find words to declare that she was the handmaid of Him who condescended to become her Son—thus refusing the title of Queen, to substitute that of slave in its room. *Ecce ancilla Domini*.‡ When shortly after her entrance into the house of Zachary, the Holy Spirit, who accompanied her in all her ways, communicated Himself to Elizabeth, and suddenly filled her with the light of prophecy, and by another miracle, still more amazing, caused the Infant whom she bore in her womb to leap with holy joy—when Elizabeth, filled with admiration and reverence, asked how the Mother of God should deign to

* "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into His glory?"—*Luke* xxiv. 26.

† *Luke* i. 29. ‡ *Ibid.* 38.

visit a mortal, Mary, ever humble, in the midst of the prodigies which were multiplied around her, and the praises which were lavished upon herself, exclaims that if the Lord had done great things in her regard—which she could not refrain from confessing—it was her very lowliness, her abjection, and misery which attracted His attention; *Respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ;** for He is pleased to raise up the being who crawls in the dust, and to enrich the indigence of the poor man with His gifts. *Exultavit humiles esurientes implerit bonis.*† See how this excellent Virgin has penetrated into the lowest depths of the mystery, and the most secret counsels of God—how she has comprehended that humiliation is the only necessary foundation of greatness, and that to ascend upon a future day to the throne of the Word made flesh, she should first have descended by humility below the level of all creatures.

This mystery of ignominy and glory will form the subject of this discourse, as it is the object of the solemnity which we celebrate. Upon this day of Mary's triumph I shall, therefore, explain the full signification of the words of my text; *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est;* and that you may clearly see in what the greatness of that august Virgin consists, I shall show you, first, that she has been great during her life-time by an excess of unparalleled humiliations which have concealed all her glory, as it were, beneath an impenetrable veil; and, secondly, that she has been great after her death by a superabundance of almost infinite glory which has imparted an undecaying lustre to her very humiliations.

O holy and glorious Mother of the Divine Word made flesh—thou whom we invoke at the beginning of all our discourses as the patroness of the preachers of the Gospel—allow me, upon this day, when I undertake to proclaim thy praises, to implore thy aid with special confidence; and I venture to hope that upon so exalted a subject thou wilt not abandon, to his own ignorance and inability, a minister of thy Son, whose greatest ambition is to honour thee. *Ave Maria.*

What can more effectually enlighten man, and confound his pride, than to see all that we style honour, elevation, glory, splendour, dignity, and reputation here below despised by God, and rejected by Him with absolute disdain—to see her whom He chose from amongst all creatures, to glorify her beyond measure, and to make her a special object of His love and favour—her whom He places above all the powers of heaven, and whom He has been pleased, if I may use the ex-

* *Luke* i. 48. † *Ibid.* 52, 53.

pression, to unite with Himself by the closest ties of kindred, positively excluded from all those vain advantages which we prize so highly, and doomed by an express dispensation of Providence to disparagement and oblivion in this world, where the most worthless beings are often surrounded by so much bustle, and pomp, and greatness? Undoubtedly this was the most important lesson, next to the ignominies of the Word made flesh, which Divine Wisdom itself could give to blind and conceited mortals. All the good men humbled, all the just men trampled under the feet of the wicked, all the virtu us kings and princes laid prostrate in the dust, which our own age, and those which have gone before it have beheld, are infinitely less calculated to affect our hearts, and to instruct our minds, than the wonderful humiliations of the Queen of Virgins, and Mother of God. Let us then attentively contemplate such an amazing spectacle, and such an instructive example. Let us follow all the degrees of the humiliation of Mary. I can perceive three of them in particular—first, the almost impenetrable obscurity which concealed all her titles to glory during the course of her mortal life; secondly, the profound abjection into which she was plunged by the ignominies of her Son; and, thirdly—what affected her heart more deeply—the apparent coldness which she experienced, even to the end, from this only and beloved Son.

What was there great and illustrious in Mary which was not concealed from the view of mortals while she lived? She was descended from the race of David, the most ancient royal line in the world at that period. Did she enjoy the honours and dignities which were due to such an exalted birth? Did any one think of respecting her as an august princess? Even the evangelists themselves seemed disposed to fling a veil over the splendour of her origin. When they point out her descent they conceal it under the genealogy of Joseph. When St. Luke relates the visit of the heavenly ambassador, you would suppose, from the manner in which he relates the event, that he speaks of the most obscure and forgotten amongst the daughters of Juda. *The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a Virgin—and the Virgin's name was Mary.** Could any one infer from such language that he referred to the noble descendant of so many monarchs. Moreover it was humiliating to her to have dwelt far from the country of David, and her ancestors, in a city which was so greatly despised by the Jews, that it became a

* *Luke* i. 26, 27.

proverb current amongst them, that nothing good could come from it.* What an additional cloud was also flung over such an illustrious extraction by the poverty in which she lived, and the humble condition to which she had descended? She united her destiny to that of a poor artisan, and she became known by no other title than that of the carpenter's wife.

But if her birth was concealed in such a variety of ways, have her other natural advantages, her grace of person—her talents of mind, and the qualities of her great soul—shone forth with greater lustre in the eyes of the world? Most certainly, we have every reason to presume that even every perfection of nature was to be found in her who was the most perfect work of the Creator—whose beauty the prophets had foretold in their canticles—who had been replenished with the spirit of wisdom and science from her most tender childhood—whose thoughts were heavenly, whose sentiments were all divine, whose words and actions were guided and dictated by God Himself? We may conjecture that such had been the case; but all these most precious gifts were so deeply buried in the darkness and silence of retreat, that they were never seen by men, and that we can know nothing respecting their existence. Whilst histories are filled with the minutest circumstances of the lives of celebrated persons—whilst every expression which dropped from their lips has been carefully preserved—whilst every fact that could make us acquainted with their character, their dispositions, their talents, and their very defects, had been treasured up with most scrupulous exactness—whilst the chisel and the pencil dispute the honour of transmitting their images to posterity—all our efforts to learn the detail of the life and actions of Mary are unavailing; we can nowhere find the accurate expression of her more than angelic features, which must have been radiant with the brilliancy, and impressed with the loveliness of every perfect virtue; our sacred writers have not essayed to describe that most admirable and unparalleled character of a creature who had become the Spouse and Mother of God; they have left us in ignorance of all that must have been affecting and sublime in her language and conversation; they merely relate a few of her short expressions; and, most generally, they say nothing respecting her, except that she was the attentive and silent spectator of the operations of Divine Wisdom, and that the recollection of them was deeply impressed upon her heart. In conformity with the ancient

* *John* i. 46.

oracles, all the glories of this incomparable daughter of the great King were inward, and concealed from human curiosity and admiration. *Omnis gloria ejus filiæ regis ab intus.**

But why should I refer to natural gifts, when graces of a different order and of a higher value were covered with a still more profound obscurity? And here you must elevate your thoughts, my brethren. You are aware of the ignominy of our race, and the first wound which was inflicted on mankind. The first man having imbibed the corruption of sin, that impure and destructive poison flowed with his blood through the veins of all his unhappy children. They were all born sinners, and received the seeds of corruption and death with the very first principle of life. Mary alone, out of all the posterity of Adam, was preserved from this dreadful contagion. She was invested with innocence and glory in her very birth: and from the first moment of her existence she appeared all beautiful in the presence of the Lord, and was not disfigured in His eyes by the slightest stain. *Tota pulchra—et macula non est in te.*† She is like the beauteous lily which adorns the valleys. *Lilium convallium.*‡ When she arose like a new star to adorn this universe, Angels hastened to behold her with delight. The light of the moon was not more fair, and the rays of the sun were not more pure in their eyes. *Pulchra ut luna electa ut sol.*§ How great would the veneration of men have been for this illustrious infant if they were able to see her as she appeared in the eyes of the Angels and of God Himself! But nothing distinguishes her from the other children of Juda as far as they could perceive; they confound her in that common mass from which she had been separated by an invisible and mysterious grace; and the only truly innocent creature which had ever existed upon this earth—she who surpasses the seraphim themselves in sanctity—encounters nothing but the world's contempt and indifference. But she, no less modest than holy, so far from repining at such injustice, will rejoice during the whole course of her life at an error which enables her to escape unobserved in the crowd, in accordance with the desires of her humility.

How great are the other treasures which this very humility will shroud beneath an impenetrable veil, in compliance with the unfathomable designs of Providence! Oh! incomprehen

* "All the glory of the king's daughter is within."—*Ps.* xliv. 14.

† "Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee."—*Cant.* iv. 7.

‡ *Ibid.* ii. 1.

§ *Ibid.* vi. 9.

sible privilege of the Divine maternity! Oh! adorable miracle of parentage, combined with virginal integrity! Oh! two-fold prodigy so unexampled, which elevates Mary to so high a degree above all creatures, what humiliations will you not cause her! Mary is a virgin. That glorious quality is a thousand times dearer to her than all the goods of this earth, and all the grandeurs of heaven; and yet, she loses it in appearance. Visited by Him whose power makes sterility and nothingness fruitful, whenever it pleases, she has conceived a Divine fruit in her chaste womb. The miracle which had been wrought in her regard by the power of the Most High, is the secret of God Himself, confided to her alone, and to one of the celestial intelligence who had been sent to announce it to her; all the rest of the world is ignorant of it; even Joseph himself, the holy spouse of Mary, has not been made acquainted with this mystery; he conceives distrust and unpleasant suspicions; but all this does not make her break silence; she bears the burden of this ignominy without a murmur; and an express revelation from on High was necessary to undeceive this afflicted, just man, at the very moment when he sought for some contrivance to put his spouse away from him without causing such an outcry about it as would bring her into disrepute. Virtuous and innocent souls alone can tell what a trial this must have been to the purest of Virgins.

But although the erroneous suspicions which were so injurious to her virtue were soon removed from the mind of Joseph, she submitted to another error which was most humiliating to her—that he should be the reputed father of this Child of Benediction—of this glorious offspring of her virginity, who has no other father besides God Himself. Hence, in the estimation of mankind, she will be deprived of her most glorious title. That dignity which has made her distinguished amongst all women is precisely what makes her be confounded with ordinary mothers. Instead of manifesting, by any remarkable sign, a miracle which would attract the homage of the whole world towards her, God wills that every appearance and action of hers should banish even the suspicion of that extraordinary grace which she has received. When forty days had elapsed after she had brought forth the Saviour, she went, in compliance with the law, to present Him in the temple, and her spouse presents Him along with her as if the Divine Son of Mary were also the Son of Joseph. She complies with the rite of purification, like the other women of Juda, as if the womb, which had been rendered fruitful by a most extraordinary prodigy, which had been sanctified, and, to a certain

extent, incorporated with the Divinity by the generation of the Incarnate Word, could have participated in the blemish of ordinary child-birth. Oh, adorable Redeemer! where is the glory of Thy Mother? Where is Thy own glory? Why should she who enjoyed the ineffable dignity of giving birth to Thee, be distinguished by no feature which could attract the veneration of mankind towards her?

The designs of God will unfold themselves, my brethren; but whilst we expect their further manifestation, I appeal to you who are so desirous of the world's esteem and applause, you who evince such an impatience of outwardly exhibiting whatever may possibly attract its attention, and its praise towards yourselves—you who conceive that no misfortune can be greater than to be overlooked and forgotten in the crowd—you who, perhaps, sacrifice your repose, your health, and your conscience to the desire of having the thoughts of others engrossed by yourself—you who adorn yourself day after day in such false colours, in order that, as merit is wanting, they may, at least, commend deceitful appearances in your person—and I ask you is it possible to conceive anything greater or more heroic than a modesty which always conceals so many virtues—so many natural and supernatural qualities—so many unexampled prerogatives—such a dignity that is so much superior to that of the Angels—which, notwithstanding so many titles to admiration, voluntarily accepts contempt, and, instead of glory the best merited, joyfully embraces humiliation itself?

Mothers have been known to live contented in obscurity, provided their children were placed in an exalted position; and, as if their existence was altogether concentrated upon those to whom they had given birth, they regard the honours exhibited towards them as if such honours were rendered to themselves personally; and they find this abundantly sufficient to gratify their ambition. Mary had an only Son, for whom alone she lived. If He had been glorified as He ought, what else could she desire? How great a lustre should be reflected upon her from the veneration and homage of which He had been the object? But, on the other hand, what additional gloom must not the ignominies of the Son have cast upon the humble and obscure life of the mother? And this is the second degree of the humiliation of this august Virgin.

Doubtless, when the Angel announced to her that the sacred Infant, whom she was about to conceive, would be great; that He would be styled the Son of the Most High; that He should sit upon the throne of David, and reign for ever over the house

of Jacob, she had abundant reason to expect that all the circumstances of His birth and life would be brilliant and glorious. Could she have expected, after such magnificent promises, that when the period of His birth would arrive, she would see herself shut out from every house in Bethlehem, and that she could find no asylum except a poor and desolate stable, in which He would be exposed to all the inclemency of the season, and receive no warmth except from the breath of mean animals? Could she have expected that, when His life would be threatened by Herod, instead of seeing the hosts of Heaven marshalled around His cradle to defend Him, she would be compelled to fly with Him in haste to a foreign land, and even to an idolatrous nation, where He should endure in silence the insults offered to His Father, and the adoration which is due to God alone, transferred to the devils themselves? Could she have supposed that this new King, who had been announced with so much splendour, would live silent and alone during thirty years, in the workshop of Joseph, joining with Him in rude and toilsome labours? But, above all, O most humble of mothers! couldst thou ever have foreseen that when He would altogether go forth from His retreat and publicly teach that pure and sublime doctrine which He had brought from the bosom of His Father—when He would perform the miracles foretold by the prophets, healing the blind and lame, restoring hearing to the deaf, and raising the dead to life—twelve poor fishermen would be His only declared disciples—that, whilst the unlettered multitude would eagerly crowd around Him, the great, the learned, the priests and Pontiffs would conspire to calumniate and to contradict Him—that they would make his actions and discourse the subject of their most bitter derision—that they would contemptuously treat Him as an impostor, a mover of sedition, a blasphemer, and a man possessed by the devil—what would then be the sentiments of thy maternal heart? But, alas! what must they afterwards have been, into what abyss of humiliation wert thou plunged, when thou wert forced to see that Son, upon whom all thy hopes, and all thy glory rested, delivered up to the fury of His enemies; loaded with chains like a malefactor; declared by the supreme council of the nation to have deserved death, dragged from one tribunal to another—become the cruel sport of servants and soldiers, inhumanly scourged, bearing a vile purple robe, and a bloody crown of thorns, as the badges of His despised royalty, and devoted by the unanimous cry of a whole people to the most cruel and ignominious of all punishments? Shall I continue?

I cannot sufficiently estimate thy constancy, O Mary! when thou didst follow Him to Calvary, following the tracks of His blood—when thou didst stand beside Him, the voluntary witness of the most horrible catastrophe, whilst He was stripped by His executioners, nailed to the fatal gibbet, and elevated naked in the air between two criminals. How hast thou been able, at that awful moment, to listen to the atrocious railleries of His persecutors, the insulting defiance with which they assailed Him, and their accents of joy and triumph in union with the sighs and groans of thy expiring Son? Oh! how often have the insults with which He was overwhelmed, fallen upon thee! How often—for can we doubt it—have these barbarous wretches, who recognised thee, exclaimed, as they insultingly pointed at thee: "Behold the Mother of Him who called Himself the Christ, and who cannot now rescue Himself from our hands." *Opprobria exprobrantium tibi ceciderunt super me.** Ah! I now begin to comprehend what was before so unintelligible. Thou hast come to this heart-rending spectacle; thou hast disregarded thy own grief, and overcome all the powers of nature, because it was necessary that thou shouldst drain the chalice of affliction to the very dregs, and that thy confusion should almost equal that of the victim of the sins of this world, who expired in shame and agony before thy very eyes. *Operuit confusio faciem meam.*†

After this can there be another degree of humiliation for Mary? Yes, my brethren, despite the blindness of the Jews, she was well aware that Christ was THE WORD MADE FLESH: she knew no other true glory except what comes from Him alone: and if He had been honoured in the eyes of men, that would have been an abundant compensation for all her ignominy. But this Divine Saviour, conforming Himself in every respect to the designs of Eternal Wisdom, and wishing to complete the mystery of that holy soul's humiliations, often treated her with apparent severity, which was to her the source of her most feeling trials. We do not read in the Gospel that He addressed her even once in public by the tender and consoling title of Mother. The only words in which we perceive that He has addressed her, seem to be lessons of severity. When only twelve years old He reproaches her in the temple for the anxiety with which she sought Him during three days after she had lost Him; as if this manifestation of a mother's love

* "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me."—*Ps.* lxviii. 10.

† "Shame hath covered my face."—*Ibid.* 8.

had been the usurpation of a privilege which He did not recognise. He addresses her in these words: "*How is it that you sought Me? did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?*"* When she ventured to manifest a desire, after many years, at the marriage of Cana, to see Him work a miracle, which she expressed with so much reserve by merely saying, *They have no wine*,† what is the answer which she hears addressed to her in the presence of a crowded assembly, and on the very first occasion when He manifests His power to the world? *Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.*‡ This does not imply—and I trust no one shall labour under such a misapprehension—that as man He did not entertain for her the respect of the most affectionate and submissive Son; but when He thus spoke, if I might use the expression, from the summit of His Divinity—as if to guard against the possibility that the distance which separates the creature from the Creator may be forgotten—what a severe blow this must have been to such an affectionate heart! what humiliation to a mother! How great, then, must it be when He shall seem to disown her in the presence of a whole nation? You cannot conceive any mortification more bitter than this. Being one day surrounded by the multitude to whom He spoke concerning the kingdom of God, His Mother and His relations, whom the Scripture styles His Mother and His brethren, were seeking Him and wished to speak to Him without delay, and some one apprised Him of it, saying, *Behold Thy Mother and Thy brethren stand without, seeking Thee.*§ what answer does He give? You may recollect that when the disciples of John the Baptist had come to Him, under almost similar circumstances to ask Him a question on behalf of their master He was not only pleased to interrupt his Heavenly discourse in order to satisfy the demands of the holy precursor, but He availed Himself of that opportunity to extol him publicly, and to proclaim, in presence of the whole multitude which heard Him that He was a prophet, and more than a prophet, and the greatest amongst those that are born of women. But, my brethren, He has no sooner been told that His Mother and His brethren were seeking Him than He answered him that had told Him so, saying, *Who is My Mother? and who are My brethren? Quæ est mater mea? et qui sunt fratres mei? And stretching forth His hand towards His disciples, He said, Behold My Mother and My brethren? Ecce mater mea et fratres mei.*‖ Oh Virgin, who bore Him in

* *Luke* ii. 49. † *John* ii. 3. ‡ *Ibid.* 4. § *Matt.* xii. 47. ‖ *Ibid.* 9.

thy womb, is it thus thou didst expect to be honoured by thy Son! But I am still more astonished at His severity in thy regard when I transport myself in spirit to the closing scene of His life. Let us hear the evangelist, my brethren. *When Jesus, therefore, had seen His Mother and the disciple whom He loved standing, He saith to His Mother, Woman, behold thy Son. After that He saith to the disciple, Behold thy Mother.** Oh, heart-rending expression! Oh, Lord! hadst Thou, not even in Thy dying hour, a more affectionate name than that of *woman!* Another must be a son to her! A stranger must address her by that very name which you refuse! Are the ties, then, which bound her to the fruit of her womb, for ever broken! is she degraded from the Divine maternity? Alas! did she not sustain enough of humiliation and anguish by Thy death and torments, without Thy last farewell, which should console her, filling up the measure of her confusion and bitterness? Oh thou, whose inconceivable anguish can receive no alleviation—go, after thou hast seen all thy glory changed into reproach—go, inhabit the house of this new son; thou wilt dwell there long, no less obscure and no less forgotten by mankind after the glorious resurrection and triumph of thy Son than thou hast been before it. Neither the disciple who brought thee into his dwelling, and who has been the support of thy old age, nor any one of the sacred writers, will relate any particular respecting the last years of thy holy life. We know that Magdalen and the other holy women, that the Apostles and disciples were honoured with the apparitions and visits of thy Son, after His resurrection; but we know not whether the same favour was granted to thee. Thy name will not be uttered more than once in the Scriptures, and even thy death will not be revealed in them.

O mother of a hidden and annihilated God! thou hast fulfilled thy destiny. Thou hast been a sharer in His annihilation and ignominy. Thou hast endured them as He did, to thy dying hour. The way of sorrow and reproach is closed to thee, and another of joy and glory is about to open. But, before thou couldst enter upon it thou shouldst give proofs of a magnanimity and a firmness superior to afflictions such as no other besides thyself could endure. Before thou couldst seem great in the midst of an elevation without limits, another description of greatness—in humiliation without measure—should also be admired in thee. *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est.* Let us now contemplate Mary in the midst of glory which raises her to an infinite degree above all her humiliation.

* *John* xix. 26, 27.

II. Nothing astonishes me so much as to see men whose minds appear by no means servile or vulgar, refusing to believe that the Redeemer of mankind, and His blessed Mother, could have lived upon earth in abjection and reproach, as if such a lot could have been incompatible with the Divinity of the former, and the august prerogative of the latter. It must be that these men who are plunged in those matters which affect their senses, and dazzled by the vain pomp of this fleeting world, must be incapable of comprehending that their life, which passeth away so rapidly, is nothing; that the space of ages, and even the whole duration of time, is nothing more than an imperceptible point in the vast abyss of eternity; that the works of God are begun and prepared in the present life to receive their form and perfection in the world to come; that passing humiliations which are changed to eternal glory, do not make virtue contemptible, but impart to it a new lustre; and that it comes forth more brilliant and beautiful from the midst of obscurity and ignominy, as the light came forth in creation, pure and dazzling from darkness and chaos.

Let us then contemplate the three degrees of Mary's humiliation, succeeded by a three-fold degree of elevation and glory.

First, the dark veils which concealed all her beauty, and all the treasures of grace which she contained are torn away by death. What great things have I now to describe, but where shall I find words to express them? Come to my aid, O Holy Spirit! author of these miracles; speak by my lips, or give me understanding to make me know those divine books in which Thy oracles are contained, that I may discover, under so many different figures, the marks by which Thou dost describe the triumph of Thy spouse.

Must Mary die? Does she who is born exempt from sin and the concupiscence which makes us liable to death, contain within her the principle of mortality? Ah! must she not wish to die after death has snatched away her beloved Son, the Son of the living God? The Son and the mother are taken away from life by an extraordinary cause. Jesus expires in compliance with His Sovereign and Omnipotent will; Mary dies by an effect of her love. Jesus sacrifices Himself because He cannot allow the human race to perish; Mary is consumed because she cannot live far from Him whom she so singularly loves. Since He has disappeared from the earth, she languishes: the ardour of her desires is like a fire which consumes her; and it is she who has said by the mouth of the prophet, *amore*

*languco.** Nothing less than a prolonged miracle is required to keep her for any time confined within the prison of this body after the sacrifice of Calvary. She demands her beloved from every creature; she calls upon them all to witness her sighs; and she entreats them to assure Him that she can no longer endure the torment which is caused her by the profound and incurable wound of her heart. *Adjuro vos si invenerilis dilectum meum ut nuntietis ei.*† He suffers Himself at length to be moved by so many tears; He calls her in turn and says: "Come forth from thy prison, O my spouse; take thy flight in freedom, O my chaste dove! *Surge, amica mea, columba mea et veni.*‡ Cease to lament. The melancholy season of thy mortal life has passed away; the winter is gone; the storms and afflictions are for ever ended. *Jam hiems transiit, imber ibiit et recessit.*§ An eternal spring succeeds. Come to the true Eden to enjoy it and to receive the embraces of thy God." *Veni in hortum meum, soror mea, sponsa.*‖ At these words the flames by which she is consumed redouble their force, and her holy soul, like an exquisite perfume, or incense of agreeable odour which melts in a burning censer, exhales itself altogether, and ascends like a sweet-smelling vapour to heaven. *Sicut virgula fumi ex aromatibus myrrhæ et thuris.*¶

Meanwhile, her sacred body remains inanimate upon earth. Yes, my brethren, inanimate, but not subject to corruption like ours. What, the ancient ark of the Hebrews was incorruptible, and the venerable ark of the new and eternal covenant will not be so! The wood which contained the tables of the law and the manna of the desert was defended against worms and decay, and the body which conceived and bore the man-God shall be delivered up as a prey to them. This living temple in which the Divine Word dwelt during nine months will be dissolved and reduced to ashes. This virginal flesh, which is the same as that of Jesus Christ Himself, as one is a portion of the other, shall be disfigured and wasted away by the dreadful effects of death. No, no, I cannot believe it. The precious remains of Mary will go down to the grave, because those of her Son have gone there before her; but they will be confided to the grave only to preserve them, and will not be consigned to it as a prey. O wonderous fact! oh, what hap-

* "I languish with love."—*Cant.* ii. 5.

† "I adjure you if you find my beloved that you tell Him."—*Ibid.* v. 8.

‡ *Ibid.* ii. 13.

§ "The winter is now past, and the rain is over and gone."—*Ibid.* ii.

‖ *Ibid.* v. 1. ¶ "As a pillar of smoke, of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense."—*Ibid.* iii. 6.

piness I feel in proclaiming it! they will be again restored to life; they will gain a complete victory over death, through the power of Him who was the first to conquer it by a glorious resurrection. His Mother—and is it not congruous that it should be so?—will be the first to arise after Him. This grace for which the rest of the elect must wait until the last day, has been once anticipated by a most just exception on behalf of the most holy of all creatures.

But in what state does she come forth, born anew from the grave? What new and blooming youth. What a splendour of grace and loveliness. I behold her who is completely changed and transfigured to the resemblance of Him who vouchsafed to make Himself like unto her, by assuming human nature in her womb. What expressions, what metaphors and figures are capable of describing what no man has beheld, what no mortal intellect can conceive? The first Eve was beautiful when she came forth pure and unsullied from the hands of the Creator, arrayed in all the charms of innocence, clothed with such majesty as became the queen of nature, and bearing upon her august brow the impress of the Divine resemblance. But how much more beautiful still is the second Eve, when, after having triumphed over hell, and having trampled the old serpent, who had seduced the common mother of men, beneath her feet, she enters her new kingdom in her capacity as Queen of Heaven. What a spectacle was then afforded, not to the inhabitants of this earth, who were not worthy of it, but to the immortal multitudes of the heavenly host. Ever since the ascension of their heavenly King they had never witnessed any spectacle so glorious as the assumption of Mary. I speak in accordance with the Scriptures, as interpreted by the ancient fathers. Behold, then, heavenly legions falling prostrate before her, and contemplating with astonishment and love a beauty which surpasses all comprehension; a splendour which almost dazzles them, and, asking each other, "Who is this incomparable creature who ascends to us from those distant regions with such majestic flight, supported by her beloved, flowing with heavenly perfumes and delights? *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum?** But, O holy Angels of God: what do you behold that can astonish you, accustomed as you are to the spectacles of heaven? Does the object of your admiration surpass in splendour that brilliant light which illuminates the firmament in the absence of the sun? Ah! you answer me that the moon is the footstool under her feet. *Luna*

* *Cant.* viii. 5.

*sub pedibus ejus.** Is she more dazzling than those great luminous bodies, those magnificent stars with which the hand of the Almighty has adorned the vault of heaven? Twelve of the most beautiful stars ranged around her form a crown which is scarce worthy of her. *Et in capite ejus corona stellarum duodecim.*† Does she also excel the sun itself? does she diffuse more warmth and light? The sun which outshines everything else is nothing more than the robe which clothes her. *Mulier amicta sole.*‡ Oh! my brethren, if such be the ornaments of her dress, what must we think of her person—of that almost Divine countenance, of those eyes with which nothing in this world can be compared, of that brow, in comparison with which the brightest heaven seems dark? What shall we say of that soul, of that pure image, and next to the soul of Jesus Christ, the most faithful image of God himself, in which the sanctity of the Father, the wisdom of the Word, and the charity of the Spirit of Love are reflected as in a mirror; so that her perfection and beauty are, in some measure, those of the adorable Trinity itself? This is the splendour in which all the humiliations of her life are lost and forgotten as the light clouds dissipate and vanish beneath the rays of the noon-day sun.

This is the first degree of Mary's glory—so much obscurity succeeded by the splendour of her triumph, and the indifference of men vindicated by the admiration of Angels.

The ignominy of her Son formed the second degree of her abjection; and the exaltation of the same Son will constitute the second degree of her glory. But, my dear brethren, how great is that abyss in which I am about to bury myself? From one ocean of wonders I plunge into another still more deep and boundless. *Abyssus abyssum invocat.*§ I have now to speak of the power and majesty of the Son of Man in His immortal kingdom. What majesty! what ineffable greatness! Saint Paul says that *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to death, even to the death of the cross; for which cause God also hath exalted Him and hath given Him a name, which is above all names, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.*‖ Mary, then, upon entering the heavenly Sion sees all there prostrate in the presence of Him whom she has borne in her womb, the four and-twenty elders who represent the whole Church of the predestined, casting their crowns at her feet, and the Angels of every

* *Apoc.* xii. 1. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*
§ *Ps.* xli. 8. ‖ *Philip.* ii. 8-10.

order manifesting in her presence a thousand signs of their profound adoration. She hears the eternal vaults of heaven re-echoing his praises without interruption, and so many voices repeating them by day and night that the sound of their concerts resembles the sound of many rivers rushing in immense cataracts, or as a boundless ocean heaving all its waves. *Audivi vocem de cœle, tanquam vocem aquarum multarum.** Seated in the highest heavens upon a throne from whence lightnings and thunders continually issue, He dwells with His Father in the midst of light inaccessible. From thence He gives laws to the universe; He regulates, by His supreme will, all that short-sighted mortals attribute to chance, to fatality, to the machinations of statesmen, to the ambition of conquerors, to the caprice of the rulers of this world; He sports with the projects and the hopes of His enemies; He converts obstacles into the very means of fulfilling his designs; He makes falsehood become subservient to the triumphs of truth, and passion and guilt to those of virtue, and the excesses of impiety to the support of religion; and unfolds the unchangeable order of His eternal and infallible designs in the midst of the great revolutions and continual vicissitudes of human affairs, *Portansque omnia verbo virtutis suæ, sedet ad dexteram majestatis in excelsis.*† Beside Him is His mother, no longer surrounded with the humiliations and sorrows of her Son, like a dark cloud as she stood at the foot of the cross, but unseen amid the splendour of His glory—no more a desolate mother, but a blessed queen, a sharer in the power of her Son, and in the homage which is paid Him. *Astitit regina a dextris tuis.*‡ Oh, my God, vouchsafe to elevate our thoughts above the slime of this earth, in which they lie grovelling, and teach us frequently to contemplate the momentous concerns of eternity, that we may never have the misfortune of sacrificing the true goods, the pure delights, and the solid glory for which we have been created, to the paltry interests of a moment, to the profane pleasures which defile us, or the false honour which deludes and degrades us.

What crowns the greatness of Mary, and constitutes the last degree of that greatness, is, that she is not only glorified with Jesus Christ, but, above all, that she is glorified by Himself. This is a recompense for all His apparent coldness, which

* "I heard a voice from heaven, as the noise of many waters."—*Apoc.* xiv. 2.

† "Upholding all things by the word of His power, sitteth on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—*Heb.* i. 3.

‡ "The queen stood on Thy right hand."—*Ps.* xliv. 10.

caused her such bitter anguish during the course of her mortal life. He now dignifies her with the name of mother, and confers upon her all the privileges and honours which are attached to that title. He elevates her in that capacity to an infinite height, not only above all the saints but above all the hierarchies of heavenly spirits. He wishes that all should obey her and acknowledge her as their queen. He has decreed that she should be the mediatrix of men with Himself as He Himself is the mediator of men with His eternal Father—that she should be the patroness of His Church, the sovereign mistress of kingdoms and empires—and He has also promised her that He will not reject a single one of her demands. Hence arises that devotion which is so ancient, so solemn, so universal, which the Catholic Church exhibits towards her under the august title of the Mother of God—a worship which is far inferior to that which is due to the Supreme Being alone, but which is also far superior to every other. Oh! to what a degree have all those who put their confidence in her, and invoke her in all their necessities, experienced the happy effects of her powerful intercession! How often has she consoled the destiny of the unfortunate, broken the chains of the captive, saved from shipwreck those who were about to perish in the waves, brought back from the paths of error and the region of the shadow of death those whom heresy or infidelity had misled, restored the hearts of their youth to those whom the most violent and dangerous passions had hurried into crime, converted hardened sinners whose return seemed desperate, loaded with the rarest favours of heaven those pious and fervent souls who had vowed to her their reverence and filial love! Read what Bernard, Francis of Assisium, Bonaventure, and Theresa have related of so many wonders wrought, so many victories gained over hell by the mere invocation of her name. What prince, what nation, what royal line have ever placed themselves under her protection in vain? A number of discourses would be scarce sufficient to relate, I will not say particular and obscure facts but glorious and public miracles, in the course of ages, which the whole world, in some measure, have witnessed. I shall not, therefore, attempt to relate them here in detail. I need but refer to that famous naval battle of Lepanto, in which the immense armies of the haughty Mussulman, who were so certain of marching to new victories, elated with all their success, like an overflowing torrent which had swept away almost every bank that had confined it, and had only one last barrier to overturn, in order to overflow and desolate the whole extent of Europe, were suddenly stopped short, overthrown and put

to flight by a feeble enemy which they had been accustomed to despise and to subdue—when Christianity was saved from its greatest dangers, and the boundless hopes of the infidels were crushed for ever by so manifest an interposition of the Mother of God, that the glory of that triumph was universally ascribed to her; and the holy Pope Pius V., instituted upon that occasion the well-known festival of our Lady of Victory, which is still celebrated throughout the Catholic world.

But, shall I observe a like silence respecting the miracles of our own days? Shall I say nothing about what is so calculated to fill the hearts of our people with emotion, and to animate the faith of all that is Christian? Despite the unfortunate infidelity of the age in which we live, who would not exclaim, my brethren, at the sight of events so unexpected, so contrary to all human foresight, which have rescued our entire generation, as it were, from the depths of the abyss—of that train of incredible catastrophes which, in a few months, have overturned the most formidable power—of the return of our ancient and lawful rulers who have been twice restored to us after such long and raging storms, and settled so soon in security upon that tottering throne, whose basis seemed shaken, and restored to their rights over the hearts of their subjects, which seemed to have been estranged—who, I say, would not exclaim at such a spectacle that there is something evidently supernatural in this, and that the finger of God is conspicuous in such an amazing resurrection? But whilst we admit the miracle, have we sought to investigate its source? And is not this a fitting occasion to proclaim a truth which has, perhaps, hitherto escaped your notice? This day, my brethren, is the anniversary of the day when one of our pious monarchs, almost two centuries ago, solemnly placed his person, his sceptre, his august race, and his people, under the immediate protection (these are the very words of the edict which he issued on that occasion) of the Blessed and ever-glorious Virgin whom he chose as the patroness of his kingdom, expressing a hope that she would be his resource in difficult emergencies, and enjoining in memory of that dedication the procession which you shall celebrate in a few moments, and which it was his desire should be attended by all the officers of justice, and all that was invested with authority in the state. This observance, which was so worthy of the wisdom as well as the faith of Louis the Just, was faithfully executed by his successors, and renewed in the most imposing form, first by Anne of Austria, during the stormy minority of Louis the Great, and subsequently by Louis the Beloved, a few years before the crimes

and disasters of our Revolution. I am not surprised that the heir of the faith of his ancestors, as well as of their tender devotion to Mary, should feel that, next to God, he was indebted to his august patroness for his restoration; and that when he returned in peaceful triumph to his kingdom, his first steps should be directed to this venerable temple which has been erected in her honour during so many ages, to lay his crown at her feet, and the hearts of all his subjects along with his own. I am not surprised that daily miracles should distinguish the whole course of a reign which had been begun under the auspices of Mary; that instead of divisions, disturbances, and obstacles, everything should be restored to life and bloom, and announce a prosperous state of things; that the most threatening dangers should vanish when human wisdom, in despair, could find no means to avert them; that all the contrivances of the wicked should be rendered unavailing—their number, their confidency, the most crafty machinations, the most extensive conspiracies, the secret sworn in their subterranean caverns, and their audacity in exciting a revolt in public; that the very success which attended guilt should be turned against its authors; that the tears which had been shed above the tomb of a prince who had been cruelly murdered should, as it were, bring forth a new hero who from his very cradle, should become the terror of his enemies, and the hope of his country and of the world at large; that the people, released from their errors, and crowding round the standard of the cross, should make the whole nation resound with the acclamations of their love for the Almighty, whilst no voice is heard from the monsters of impiety and anarchy, bound fast in chains, except the last groans of expiring fury; finally, that our princes, released from all intestine fear, and reviving all the glory of their ancestors, should lead their faithful and victorious armies to extinguish the last blaze of rebellion in other lands, and to fill up that gulf which sacrilegious hands had opened to swallow Europe in its depths. *Quæ est ista quæ progreditur terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata?**

Thus it is, O Queen of Heaven! that the nations which rashly embark upon the stormy sea of revolutions—borne onward by a restless impetuosity, strive to find an imaginary happiness in the midst of waves and tempests—are not always abandoned to their rashness without some refuge; if thou vouchsafest to be their patroness they experience the effects of the mercy of

* "Who is she that cometh forth terrible as an army set in array?"—*Cant.* vi. 9.

the Lord, and behold the miracles of His power manifested on their behalf even in the depths of that abyss in which they are buried. *Ipsi viderunt opera Domini et mirabilia ejus in profundo.** After this great God has delivered them for a time to violent and dreadful agitations, and suffered them sometimes, when elated by vain success, to imagine themselves elevated to the clouds, and sometimes humbled by the reverse of fortune, they seem to have descended to the lowest depths of annihilation. *Ascendunt usque ad cœlos et descendunt usque ad abyssos.*† When intoxicated by licentiousness and pride they can neither see their way, nor walk with a firm tread, nor even preserve the faintest ray of reason or wisdom. *Turbati sunt et moti sunt sicut ebrius et omnis sapientia eorum devorata est,*‡ if amongst such aggravated calamities they at length remember that God whom they have abandoned, and implore his mercy through thy intercession, *Et clamaverunt ad Dominum cum tribularentur,*§ He will hear thy prayers, and hold forth a helping hand to them at the very moment when they seem irrecoverably lost. *Et de necessitatibus eorum eduxit eos.*‖ A delicious and favourable breeze suddenly succeeds to the impetuous blast of the tempest; the calm and silence of the waves succeed the roar of the angry waters. *Et statuit procellam ejus in auram et siluerunt fluctus ejus.*¶ Joy and gratitude will supplant all sadness and despair; *Et lætati sunt quia siluerunt,*** and the vessel of the state, saved from the most dreadful shipwreck, enters, amidst acclamation and hymns of thanksgiving, into the harbour of security, where it shall be ever sheltered from all future injury. *Et deduxit eos in portum voluntatis eorum.*††

May we all, O holy Virgin! place our confidence in thy powerful protection, and thus arrive at the haven of eternal happiness. *Amen.*

* "These have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep."—*Ps.* cvi. 24.

† "They mount up to the heavens and they go down to the depths."—*Ibid.* 26.

‡ "They were troubled and reeled like a drunken man."—*Ibid.* 37.

§ "And they cried to the Lord in their affliction."—*Ps.* cvi. 28.

‖ "And He brought them out of their distresses."—*Ibid.*

¶ "And He turned the storm into a breeze, and the waves were still."—*Ibid.* 29.

** "And they rejoiced because they were still."—*Ibid.* 30.

†† "And he brought them to the haven which they wished for."—*Ibid.*

SERMON ON DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF MARY.

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF THE NUNS OF THE VISITATION IN PARIS, IN 1829.

"All the glory of the king's daughter is within."—*Psalm* xliv. 14.

Amongst pure creatures there is one who is endowed with such sublime privileges, and elevated by grace, so far above all others, that in the Holy Scriptures she is sometimes styled the daughter, and sometimes the sister, or spouse of the Most High. *Filia regis, soror, sponsa*, and sometimes the only matchless work of His almighty hands. *Una est perfecta mea.** This beloved daughter of the King of Heaven, this august Queen of the universe is Mary. And yet, if I look for any outward and apparent mark of such incomparable greatness, I cannot find any whatever. I merely see a poor and modest Virgin who has united her lot to that of an humble artizan, who supports himself by the labour of his hands, and lives in profound obscurity, far from the eyes of men. Where then is that glory which is so loudly extolled in the Holy Scriptures and Canticles of the Church? You have heard it this moment. It is altogether interior, and concealed from human eyes; it is all within her heart. *Omnis gloria ejus filiæ regis ab intus*. But what immense treasures may be found within that heart? These treasures are all the perfections of the Angels and saints, but in such a degree of excellence that nothing even in heaven itself can be compared with them. What do I say? They are the perfections of God Himself, as faithfully copied as they can possibly be in any creature. It is, therefore, just that we should offer our tribute of veneration and love to this sacred heart; and as we adore the heart of Jesus, because it is the heart of a God, we should reverence the heart of Mary because next to that of her Son, it is the most worthy sanctuary in which the Divinity has ever dwelt upon this earth.

This, my dear sisters, is the foundation of a devotion which has been very general, and strongly sanctioned throughout the Church for the last two centuries; and this is the object of the festival which you celebrate to-day—a festival of a deeply affecting character, on which virgins consecrated to the service of the Lord, offer their homage to the very heart of the most pure and fervent of all virgins, whom they invoke as their patroness, whom they love as their mother, whom they strive to imitate as their model. May this instruction which you are

* *Cant.* vi. 8.

now about to hear, heighten your esteem, and add new vigour to your zeal for such a holy devotion! May the same feelings be shared by all who have come to bear a part in this sacred ceremony!

Without undertaking to offer any arguments in vindication of that homage which we offer to the heart of Mary, and which is sufficiently vindicated by the approbation of the Church, I shall endeavour to make you feel the congruity, the utility, and the importance of that devotion, in such a manner that every truly Christian soul may become still more attached to it, and may find additional consolation in its observance. This discourse will be a simple and familiar panegyric on the heart of this Blessed Virgin; and I shall endeavour to show you, in three short reflections, how worthy it is of our esteem—first, from the perfections by which it is adorned; secondly, from the close relations which unite it to God; and thirdly, from the love for us by which it is inflamed.

O, Mother of our Saviour! how can we praise thy heart as it deserves, unless thou vouchsafest to lay open to us this sanctuary of all virtues, this living temple of the Holy Spirit, that we may behold the treasures it contains, and that by imparting the knowledge of them to our hearers, we may fill them with admiration, gratitude, and love, for the most perfect and most bountiful of all hearts next to that of Jesus. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—In commencing this discourse, you will allow me to make a supposition. If we possessed some venerable relic of the Mother of God; if her heart, or some other portion of that virginal body, which conceived the Word made flesh, remained on earth, and if such a sacred treasure were in our possession, to what use would we convert it? You instantly reply that we would place it upon the altar: that not content with abundantly bestowing upon it all the honours which are afforded in the Catholic Church to the mortal remains of the saints, we would add to these others which are still greater and more extraordinary on account of the unparalleled dignity of the Queen of Angels. In short, that the heart of Mary, though lifeless and insensible, would be the most precious of all treasures in our estimation. These are the feelings with which our religion would inspire us if this heart had been found amidst the dust of the tomb. And, because it is living and glorious in heaven, where it is intimately united with God, where it burns with the purest flames of Divine love, where it sympathizes in our miseries, and ardently desires to make us sharers in that happiness which it enjoys, shall we, therefore, suppose

that we have less reason to honour it? Shall that which gives it the strongest claims to our veneration be the very cause which will induce us to withhold that veneration from it? Ah! let us abandon those vain subtleties on which I cannot comprehend how prudent and enlightened men could dwell for a single moment. If there be any one in this assembly who is afraid to manifest too much respect and veneration for the heart of the purest of all created beings, I would beg of him to consider how highly God Himself has esteemed the heart of man. The great God does not scorn to acknowledge that He is captivated by this wayward heart—that He loves it even to jealousy—that He glories in overcoming it and establishing His reign within it. Hear Him sometimes commanding with a tone of authority—*Thou shalt love Me with thy whole heart*;* sometimes humbling Himself to a tone of entreaty, and saying: *My son, give Me thy heart.*† See how He promises to manifest Himself without a veil to the pure heart—to set no limits to His liberality towards the upright heart—to pour out the treasures of His mercy upon the feeling and compassionate heart. When He exhibits His indignation towards His people, it is because unfaithful Israel has turned away its heart from Him; when He shows mercy it is only the humble and contrite heart He forgives; when He speaks to us it is to our hearts His Divine communications are addressed. *Loquor ad cor ejus.*‡ In a word—for all the Scriptures may be adduced in proof of it—God keeps His eyes for ever fixed upon the heart of man; He observes all its inclinations; He sees nothing, He esteems nothing in man except the heart. *Dominus autem intuetur cor.*§ And do we not constantly say that a man is great, virtuous, respected, and worthy of our love from the qualities of his heart alone? Is it not upon the hearts of heroes and of saints that all our commendations are bestowed!

And will any one ask after this why we venerate the heart of Mary! Has such an one seriously reflected upon the excellence of this heart—upon the more than human, the more than Angelic perfections which adorn it! Oh! my God, when Thou hast created our first parent in original rectitude and justice, Thou hast looked with complacency upon his pure and upright heart, Thou hast loved it as one of the most beautiful works of Thy hands; Thou hast impressed upon it the seal of Thy Divine resemblance, and established between Thyself and it a close sympathy and an intimate agreement of feeling, affection, and will. But, alas! sin speedily interrupted this happy union;

* *Deut.* vi. 5. † *Prov.* xxiii. 26. ‡ *Osee* ii. 14. § 1 *Kings* xvi. 7.

Thy image was disfigured; the heart of man was reduced to a state of degradation, and received the odious stigma of Thy enemy: and that which had been an object of admiration to the Angels became a hideous object of aversion and horror. But, thanks to the infinite mercy of the Lord, so great a calamity was not beyond recovery. However, the contagion extended to all the posterity of guilty man. According to the expression of St. Paul, they are all under sin;* and for the space of four thousand years the eye of God did not discern, amidst all the generations of men, a single heart which was not infected with this fatal contagion, this hideous leprosy. This was the source of the disgust and indignation which forced Him once to exclaim that He repented for having created man, because all the thoughts and inclinations of men's hearts were bent towards evil.† At length after so many ages had passed away, His Divine looks repose upon an object worthy of engaging them. A child of benediction appears upon this earth which had lain so long beneath a curse; a daughter of Adam is preserved from the universal contagion by a miracle of grace, and conceived in innocence, and born in holiness. The Lord beholds all the beauty and all the purity of the first model upon which He had formed man revived in her person. Oh! with what joy does He behold this heart which no stain has ever defiled, which no seeds of passion have ever corrupted, which, even no trifling fault will ever make less deserving of His love, this heart whose inclinations are all holy and whose affections are all heavenly. With what satisfaction does He view His own image reflected in it as in a faithful mirror, and finds in it every feature of that resemblance which had been effaced from the rest of mankind! Do you wish to learn, my sisters, in what words He expressed His tender regard for this beloved creature, and how He exalts this most perfect of all the works of His hands? After having produced the universe out of nothing, He saw all that He had made and contented Himself with saying that they were good;‡ but how different is the language which He uses after He had given existence to Mary. "Thou art beautiful," He says, "O my beloved, thou art all beautiful. *Ecce tu pulchra es, amica mea,*§ *tota pulchra es.*‖ My eyes which observe spots in the most shining stars, and imperfections in those pure spirits which surround my throne, cannot discover the least defect in thee!" *Et macula non est in te.*¶ Then addressing those intelligences, glorying in His work in their presence, He says to them:

* *Rom.* iii. 9. † *Gen.* vi. 6. ‡ *Gen.* i. 10. § *Cant.* i. 14.
‖ *Ibid.* iv. 7. ¶ *Ibid.*

"Behold this chaste dove; she is unequalled; she is singularly perfect and surpassingly great in the world." *Una est columba mea, perfecta mea.** Shall I continue to unfold the hidden meaning of the most mysterious of all canticles, and now show you the heavenly spirits assembling at the voice of the Deity? Shall I describe the rapturous astonishment which they feel at the sight of so much beauty? You fancy you can hear them exclaim, "Who is this admirable creature who combines the perfection of all others in her single person?" *Quæ est ista?*† They compare the brilliancy with which she shines, sometimes to the mild and placid light of the moon; *Pulchra ut luna;*‡ sometimes to the more vivid brightness of the morning star; *Quasi aurora consurgens;*§ and sometimes to the dazzling splendour of the sun; *Electa ut sol.*‖ But whence proceeds this delightful odour which delights and attracts them! *Curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum.*¶ Is it not from her heart, as from a precious vase filled with the most exquisite essences, which, by their combination, form the most delicious of all perfumes. *Ex aromatibus myrrhæ, et thuris, et universi pulveris pigmentarii.*** But we shall leave this figurative language, which we have borrowed from the sacred Scriptures, and consider what these images represent—namely, the qualities, the virtues of the heart of Mary. And first, let us speak of her innocence. Her pure heart was a stranger to the irregular propensities of nature; it had no reason to apprehend that it should ever know them; and yet what precautions she took to preserve a treasure which she could not lose! What avoidance of the world and all its occasions! what retirement, what solitude from her earliest years! What shall we say of that modesty that is alarmed at the sight of an Angel! What of that purity of soul which, without a moment's hesitation, chooses Virginity in preference—not only to all the greatness and all the pleasures of the earth, for that would be only a trifling sacrifice—but to the ineffable honour of the Divine maternity, which infinitely transcends all utterance or conception.

To such heroic purity the most profound humility is united by a glorious alliance. Observe this daughter of David, who reckons so many kings amongst her ancestors, condemning herself to voluntary obscurity, becoming the spouse of an artisan, and devoting herself to all the humiliations which are inseparable from a state of life which is so lowly in the eyes of men.

* *Cant.* vi. 8. † *Ibid.* vi. 8, 9. ‡ *Ibid.* § *Ibid.*
‖ *Ibid.* ¶ *Ibid* i. 3. ** *Ibid* iii. 6.

Observe all her actions, listen to all her words, contemplate her very silence, and you will learn to how great a degree she desires abjection and humiliation. When a prince of the heavenly host salutes her with reverence, and announces to her that she will conceive in her womb the Son of the Most High, trembling and amazed, as if she feared to receive the title of queen, she eagerly assumes that of a hand-maid; and though called to be a spouse and mother she places herself in the position of a slave. *Ecce ancilla Domini.** When Elizabeth breaks forth into admiration at the consideration of the miracles which had been wrought by her presence when she overwhelms her with praises and styles her "blessed amongst all women"—Mary regards her own nothingness and lowly condition even in the midst of so much that is calculated to dazzle her. *Respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ.*† She attributes greatness and sanctity to God alone. *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est, et sanctum nomen ejus.*‡ When Joseph, ignorant of the cause of her pregnancy, conceives unpleasant suspicions, although she could remove them by one word, she prefers to bear the weight of this reproach rather than reveal to her holy spouse a secret which redounded to her glory. The law obliged the women of Judea to purify themselves from the stain which they contracted by becoming mothers; yet, although Mary always continued a Virgin she complied with the ceremony of purification as well as they, and concealed the privilege and the sanctity of her Divine maternity beneath the veil of this humiliating ceremony. When has she been known to make a vain display or exhibition of the favours of Heaven? When has she allowed even the least glimpse of the lights and graces with which she was filled, to appear to public view? When has one word, which contributed to gain the esteem of others, escaped her lips? Or rather, has not her whole life been an unbroken silence! Whether she is outraged or honoured, she remains silent; when the shepherds or the magi adore her Divine Son, when the Pharisees, the priests, and the soldiers overwhelm Him beneath the most unmerited insults, she is silent; when even her Son addresses her in terms of apparent harshness, she is also silent, and in secret she blesses the designs of that Providence which so effectually co-operates with the desires of her humility. Oh! my dear sisters, how easy is the observance of silence to souls that are truly humble! but how difficult it is to the proud! and how unavailing would the effort be to banish from a community discourses which are idle

* *Luke* i. 38. † *Luke* 48. ‡ *Ibid.* 49.

and indiscreet, which are, perhaps, censorious and uncharitable, unless the poisonous root of pride is vigorously rooted from the heart?

But, to return to Mary. Detached from glory, even to the extent of fearing and hating it, she despises riches so much that even from her earliest youth she divests herself of them, and embraces all the rigour and privation of poverty. Oh! how lowly is the roof and how confined is the abode of her who will be placed above all the choirs of Angels, in the house of God, upon a future day! how poor and coarse are the garments which cover her who will yet have the sun for a robe, and the stars for a crown!* How great is the poverty of this Virgin who brings forth her Son in a stable, and who can afford her infant God no bed but the straw, and no cradle but a crib! Worthy indeed of being the mother of Him who will not have whereon to lay His head, who will live on the bread of alms, who will die racked upon a cross, and leave the maxim, "Blessed are the poor," as a treasure to His disciples. My sisters, if we desire to understand thoroughly and to appreciate fully this maxim, which is so incomprehensible to the world, and which is not always relished, even by religious persons, let us enter into the heart of Mary; there we shall see evangelical poverty shining like a precious pearl in the midst of so many other excellent virtues; and we shall feel satisfied that she who possesses it is more enriched by that poverty than all the princes and monarchs of this world can be with all their opulence. But how seldom are the true poor of Jesus Christ to be met with. To deserve the name, we must be dead to all things, we must renounce the interests and enjoyments, the ease and conveniences of life, in thought and deed; we must think but little of life itself; we must despise superfluities; we must even be without solicitude for what is necessary; and like St. Paul, we must receive health or sickness, joy or tribulation, abundance or distress, with equal indifference. Such is the universal detachment, the perfect poverty of spirit to which our Saviour has given the first place amidst the beatitudes; and such was the detachment of the heart of Mary. Such is the source of that patience, which is invincible in labours and sufferings and contradictions, that unchangeable kindness, even to the most merciless and unjust enemies, that unvarying calm and serenity in the midst of dangers, that generosity which is superior to every sacrifice.

* "A woman clothed with the sun, and on her head a crown of stars." —*Apoc.* xii. 1.

that spirit of mortification which makes a pure and sinless body a constant sacrifice to penance, that complete annihilation of self-will, that blind and silent obedience which suffers no examination, nor delay, nor distinction, nor reserve. Whether she heard the voice of Joseph or of the Angel—whether a duty was enjoined by the law of a prince, or by that of Moses—whether she was obliged to leave Nazareth, her native place, to go to Bethlehem, or to fly from Bethlehem to Egypt, to break the midnight sleep, or to bear the burden and the heat of the day, to deliver her Son to the knife of circumcision, or to offer Him in the temple, to bear Him company in his toilsome course, through the cities and towns of Judea, or to ascend the hill of Calvary along with Him, she never hesitated or murmured. She knew no duty but to comply with the will of Heaven at any cost, in whatever manner it may be manifested. What a model for imitation, my sisters! And who can find a lawful pretext to dispense with the duty of obedience, when the mother of God found none?

But what have I attempted, O Lord? Could I have really believed it to be possible to commend in a single discourse all the perfections of the heart of Mary? If I had a hundred tongues and a hundred voices, could I even enumerate them? Is not this blessed heart an unfathomable abyss of wonders and perfections? How far could all my efforts go to give even the most faint idea of them? And what is all that I have said in comparison with what remains untold? Have I spoken of the faith of Mary—of that faith which not only removes mountains, but makes the Eternal Word descend into her womb from the highest heavens?—of her hope, which was so much more heroic than that of Abraham, as Mary's hope remained unshaken after the very death and burial of the true Isaac!—of her charity? O, charity of Mary, vast furnace by which her heart was consumed, what mortal lips could express thy intensity? And how many other perfections besides these must we pass over in silence? Alas, how imperfect is the picture which I unfold, and how grievously does my inability afflict and confound me! Oh, could I only present to your view the heart of this incomparable Virgin, as the Angels and Saints in heaven behold it eternally, how ardent would be the transports of your love! For, as the beauty of virtue is so great that from the bottom of the pure heart in which it dwells, it imparts to the features an inexpressible charm, and a kind of heavenly splendour which fascinates the eyes, what a delightful spectacle must it not be to behold so many virtues openly displayed, as it were, in their source in the heart of

the most perfect of all creatures? Contemplate, at least in spirit, my dear sisters, this object which is so worthy of your religious veneration; but do not content yourself with offering it unprofitable honours. It is proposed to your imitation no less than to your devotion; or rather the imitation of her virtues is the most essential quality of that devotion. Methinks I hear a voice coming forth from that heart and saying to you: "Oh, my beloved children, whom I have brought away from the world and united under my protection in this asylum—you who bear my name, and who have learned from your holy founders to love me—I ought to be your model. I have been pleasing to God only because I have been humble and docile, patient and mortified, chaste and modest, laborious and poor, meek, silent, recollected, fervent in prayer, detached from all perishable things, careful only to glorify the Lord, charitable and indulgent to others, rigid to myself alone, faithful to my most trifling duties, ready to die a thousand deaths sooner than to allow even a passing shadow of sin to come near me. What I have been you should also be as far as your infirmity allows. It is in my train virgins will arrive at the abode of happiness. *Adducentur regi virgines post eam.** I present none to my Son except those who follow in my steps, and who endeavour to imitate my actions. *Proximæ ejus afferentur tibi.*† They alone shall taste the joys of heaven, and sing the canticle of the Lamb. *Afferentur in lætitia et exultatione.*‡ I lay open my heart to you that you may form your own to its likeness, and that I may recognise this resemblance upon a future day, and may lead you as my beloved children into that everlasting sanctuary where the King of glory dwelleth." *Adducentur in templum regis.*§

You have now seen that the heart of Mary is entitled to our homage by the perfections which adorn it. I shall show you that it is no less deserving of that homage by the intimate relation which unites it to God.

II. My dear sisters, I must now rise above all human conception, and enter into the region of the most sublime mysteries, as my subject leads me to treat of those incomprehensible relations which unite a mere creature to the Deity in the capacity of daughter, spouse, and mother. We shall not strive to find sublime expressions; for such an attempt would

* "After her, virgins shall be brought to the King."—*Ps.* xliv. 15.
† "Her neighbours shall be brought to Thee."—*Ibid.*
‡ "They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing."—*Ibid.*
§ *Ps.* xxxv. 11.

only make our weakness and the disproportion between our language and such a sublime subject more conspicuous; but, my dear sisters, we shall endeavour to nourish your piety, and to assist you in understanding more clearly what a heart she, who could contract such an astonishing relationship and such a close alliance with the Deity Himself, must have possessed.

The Lord had decreed in His eternal counsels that the world should be saved by the incarnation of His Divine Word, and that this ineffable mystery should be accomplished in the womb of a Virgin by the operation of the Holy Ghost. From that moment forward, the glory of the adorable Trinity required that nothing should be wanting to the perfection of a creature who had been called to such a sublime destiny. The Father adopted her in a special manner who was fated to be the spouse of the Holy Spirit, and the Mother of His only Son. He preserved her alone from original sin; He sanctified not only her birth but her conception, even from her mother's womb. He endowed her with an unprecedented and unlimited profusion of graces. Before she saw the light, she could be styled, "Full of grace," with as much truth as Gabriel afterwards styled her. It may be said that "The Lord was with her," loading her with His favours, adorning her with His richest gifts, and employing all His care to embellish her. It may be said that even then she was "Blessed amongst women," and that she surpassed all the daughters of Adam in holiness. At the very first moment of her life, her Creator received her in His arms, and He wishes that she should recognise no other father besides Himself alone. Long before that age when other children are enlightened by the earliest dawn of reason, she hears a strong but tender voice within her heart, which says to her, "Hearken, O my daughter!—thou whom I have chosen from amongst all creatures to give thee this name—Hearken, and learn my designs in thy regard." *Audi filia et vide.** Forget thy country and thy people, thy father's house and the authors of thy existence. *Obliviscere populum tuum et domum patris tui.*† For thy King, thy God, whom the whole world adores, shall greatly desire thy beauty; He demands thy heart, He wishes to exercise undivided sway over it; and He will be jealous of the least division of it. *Et concupiscet rex decorem tuum quoniam ipse est Dominus Deus tuus; et adorabunt eum.*‡ In compliance with this mysterious voice, Mary severs every tie of nature. She has scarce left the cradle when she confines herself within the temple, where, a voluntary captive, chained

* *Ps.* xliv. 11. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.* 12.

by love to the foot of the altar, her conversation is with Heaven alone. Whilst she consecrates herself to virginity by irrevocable engagements, and spends days and nights in the holy place, engaged in prayer, the Lord erects within her another temple holier still, another sanctuary far more august, where the Deity shall corporally dwell upon a future day. In this heart, the sacred fire is never extinguished, and an agreeable incense continually burns there. Within it is the true Holy of Holies, out of which the Eternal sends forth His oracles in secret, and the living ark, of which that of the Jews was only a figure. Oh! what pleasure the Lord must feel in this tabernacle, which is invisible to men, and which He loves to prepare as a fit dwelling-place for His Son.

It is also within this virginal heart that her ineffable union with the Holy Spirit is celebrated. O, Divine Spirit, descend: the spouse is ready; she is adorned with chastity, humility, and love, with all the variety and magnificence of those virtues which form the nuptial robe which is most precious and most worthy of Thee. *In vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate.** Perfect within her that prodigy which has been expected for ages past—that mystery which is beyond the comprehension of Angels themselves—which should unite you to her by indissoluble ties, and give her a title and privileges to which no creature could ever aspire. What can we say upon this subject, my sisters? How can we convey a notion of the favours which Mary received? The Spirit of God has visited her. Is not that saying enough? Had He not visited others before her? How many holy souls had tasted the sweetness of His Divine caresses, and were inebriated with chaste delights in an affectionate union with Him! Mary, from her earliest youth, was made familiar with all these graces; she always maintained the closest union with the Spirit of the Lord; her days were spent amid the delights and languors of love; even sleep did not interrupt her union with her beloved; and, whilst her senses slumbered, her heart was watching for Him. *Ego dormio et cor meum vigilat.*† Did nothing great occur when she was addressed by the Angel—when the Divine Majesty invested her on every side, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her‡—when the Holy Spirit, who had always resided within her, and had long before overwhelmed her with His favours, came upon her in a new and extraordinary form§—when He filled her, as it were, with His own plenitude—when, by an unexampled prodigy, He rendered her virginal womb fruitful,

* *Ps.* xliv. 10. † *Cant.* v. 2. ‡ *Luke* i. 35. § *Ibid.*

and made it bring forth that fruit of benediction which is sanctity itself, and who was called the Son of the Most High?* Ah! if this same Spirit, when He descended upon the Apostles, changed them into new men—if He raised them above the level of human nature—if He taught them all science, and suddenly transformed them, by the power which He gave them, almost into gods upon this earth—what effects must He have produced in Mary? With what light and fervour, with what supernatural strength must He have filled her when He came, not like tongues of fire, but like a torrent of Divine flames to burn away and to consume all that was earthly within her, to renew her being, which was already so perfect, to sanctify her womb, and incorporate it with the Divinity by making her conceive a God! Ah, if such wonderful favours have been granted to mere servants, what gifts must He not have lavished upon His Spouse! What purity, what undecaying beauty must the Spouse have imparted by His Divine embrace to that heart with which He was pleased to unite Himself by a union so close and new? I must stop short, for I feel that expression fails to convey my thoughts, and that my thoughts themselves are far below the miracles which I have to propose to your consideration.

Let us pass on to the third relation which unites this glorious virgin to the Divinity. She is not only a daughter and a spouse, but she is also a mother; this is a title which she shares with no other, and which is the consummation of her glory. For although she is the daughter of the Father by a special adoption, and the spouse of the Holy Spirit in an ineffable manner, which is peculiar to herself, the title of children of God may be given to all the faithful, and that of His spouses to all virgins, in a sense which is far less elevated and rigorous, but which is, nevertheless, true; and even the Scriptures make use of the same language. But who else besides Mary has ever been styled the Mother of God? Who else has conceived the Son of the Eternal in her womb, and brought Him forth and nourished Him with her milk? Oh! this is a miracle which confounds our feeble reason and overturns the whole natural order of our ideas. Oh! this is the dignity to which no other can be compared, and to which nothing that we know can ever approach. What! is it possible that He who gives their whole being to creatures, and who receives nothing from them, could receive life itself from Mary? That He who, by a word, created all that exists at present, could have been

* *Luke* i. 35.

produced according to His human existence and His flesh by that daughter of Juda? He who gives nourishment and increase to every living thing that breathes, has been nourished from her substance, and grown up from it! He who sustains the world with His hand has been borne in her arms! He who is the Sovereign Lord of all creation has been the obedient, submissive, and respectful Son of this Virgin.* No; in vain would we seek after any greatness upon earth except that of God, which is capable of being compared to that of Mary; we could not find it. When St. Paul wished to make the Hebrews comprehend how highly Jesus Christ was elevated above all the hierarchy of heaven, he exclaims: *To which of the Angels hath He said at any time, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee?*† With a slight change, and an observance of suitable proportions, may I not also exclaim in turn, "To which of those sublime intelligences has the Son of God ever said, Thou art My mother: this day hast thou begotten Me?" But this is what He shall repeat to Mary for all eternity; and this will elevate her to an immense distance above all the principalities and powers of heaven.

But to return to her heart, which is the special object of this discourse—what impressions, what influences of grace must you not believe it to have received, during the nine months which the Word Incarnate spent in her womb? What brightness must have blazed from this sun which was so long confined within it, and which suffered no ray to escape without! What emotions must not this heart have felt when the Blessed Mother held the Divine Infant in her arms, and clasped Him to her bosom! With what sanctity was not this heart filled during the thirty years of uninterrupted intercourse, and the daily conversations between the Son and the Mother! What a heart must that have been whose sentiments corresponded with the sublimity of an incomprehensible union with the Three Divine Persons, and were, in every respect, worthy of the daughter, spouse, and Mother of God.

Most certainly, Mary is not God. If you consider her nature and person, she is separated an infinite distance from the Supreme Being; and woe be unto him who would confound the creature with the Creator. But if you contemplate her privileges and her relations, they are altogether Divine, and you cannot think upon them without finding yourself, against your will, altogether lost in the splendour of the Divinity. Her maternity is Divine; her Son who is the bone of her bone and

* *Luke* ii. 51. † *Hebr.* i. 5.—*Ps.* ii. 7.

flesh of her flesh, is a God. I would be almost tempted to say, that everything in her is Divine, with the exception of herself. Therefore, as we style the Scriptures Divine, because they are inspired by the Holy Ghost, and as such expressions as the divine prophets and the divine Paul are familiar to us, whenever we allude to those who have been the organs of that Holy Spirit, whilst no one mistakes the meaning which we attach to them, we have much more forcible reasons to make use of such expressions as the Divine Mother or the Divine Virgin, not to attribute a Divine nature to Mary, for that would be blasphemy; but to denote the excellence and the closeness of her union with the adorable Trinity. How great then are the absurdities of those societies who are separated from the true Church—who, whilst they adore the Son, refuse to manifest the least respect for the mother—who make it a matter of religion to observe no difference between her and the other children of Adam—who imagine that they do what was acceptable to Him who has commanded us to honour our parents, by reviling her from whom He has been pleased to receive His birth! How much greater still is the blindness of the children of the Church who acknowledge the obligation of invoking and venerating the mother of our Saviour, who abridge their devotions to her as much as possible, who dispute her titles and prerogatives, and are zealous only in diminishing her glory, who do not admit that her conception was immaculate, or that her assumption is any more than her death, who look with dissatisfaction upon every devotion of which she is the object, and upon every festival which has been instituted in her honour, for fear, as they assert, that the rights of the Son should be interfered with by what is so liberally granted to the mother; and that the Divine King of Heaven may conceive from thence a jealousy which they could not suspect a prince of this earth to be capable of feeling towards her who had given him birth! And what shall we say of those who commend the homage which is offered to Mary, who think it well that all should kneel before her images and the altars which are dedicated to her—that festivals should be celebrated in honour of her name, her dolours and the different mysteries of her life, but who cannot endure the thought of honouring her heart with a special veneration, as if there was any portion of her more worthy of respect and veneration than the sacred heart—that heart which is the throne of virgin purity, of the most ardent Divine love, and of the most tender love for men, as we shall soon see.

O holy Church! faithful depository of all truth! thou alone

art always wise, always conformable to reason, and dost manifest a perfect harmony between the dogmas which thou dost profess and the worship which thou hast established. Thou dost render to God alone, and to Jesus Christ His only Son, the supreme worship of adoration; and to distinguish it from every other worship, thou art pleased to give it a particular name—that of *latria*. Thou dost render to Angels and saints, as the friends of God, a homage of veneration and respect which is infinitely inferior to the first; and in order that it may also have a distinctive title, thou dost style it *dulia*. But in the immense interval which separates God from the Angels and saints, and a pure creature who has been elevated by grace to the Divine maternity—who, by her nature is infinitely inferior to the Deity, but who, by her prerogative as a mother, and her privileges as a spouse, is incomparably nearer to that Deity than any other creature can possibly be; and to honour her as she deserves, thou hast assigned her a special devotion which excludes adoration, which is due to God alone, which surpasses the veneration which is granted to all that is not God; and thou hast styled this worship *hyperdulia*. Thus every due proportion and restriction is observed; and the same spirit of order pervades the earthly Jerusalem as that which reigns above, where the Son of Man is seen seated at the right hand of the Father, and at the right hand of the Son of Man she who bore Him in her womb—the Mother of God and the Queen of Heaven! *Astitit regina a dextris tuis.**

We are not afraid of incurring the reproach of superstition by offering our homage to a creature whom the Lord Himself has glorified so much, and we desire to address her heart in particular, not only on account of the perfections by which it is adorned, and the intimate relations which unite it to God, but still more on account of the love with which it burns for us, as I shall now show you very briefly.

III.—This last part of the subject is the most interesting of any, as it refers to the love which is felt for us by this holy and sublime creature, to whom nothing short of God is superior, and who, without being God herself, nevertheless closely approaches the Divinity. The love which she bears us is as much superior to every other affection as the dignity of this glorious Virgin transcends all other greatness. It is not only a tender, ardent, generous, and heroic love; but we may go to the length of asserting that it is an excessive love which seems to exceed all limits. And why? Because Mary, by a miracle of

* *Ps.* xliv. 10.

charity in our favour, and by an apparent subversion of the order of nature, has given up the very existence of her Divine Son to our salvation, and God as He was, she offered Him up and sacrificed Him for our sakes. When Jesus Christ wished to show the most wonderful effects of the charity of the Father, He says that He so loved the world as to deliver up His only Son. *Sic enim dilexit mundum ut filium suum unigenitum daret.** This is what the great Apostle styles the excess of God's love to men. *Propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos.*† But the heart of Mary has been capable of a like excess. She has delivered up the same only Son, that adorable fruit of her womb, for the redemption of the world. *Sic dilexit mundum ut filium suum unigenitum daret*—with this difference, that so great a sacrifice cost no pain to the Eternal Father, who is essentially exempt from suffering, but it has caused such deep and bitter anguish to the most tender and feeling of all mothers, that no language can convey an adequate notion of the martyrdom which she endured—a martyrdom which did not begin upon Calvary, but at the very moment when she received the message of the Angel. As soon as he had announced to her that she would bring forth a Son, who should be called Jesus, or Saviour, she comprehended the full significancy of that name, and she plainly saw that she was called to bring forth to the world the victim of the human race. She fully consented to this, and by that voluntary acceptance she devoted herself to all the afflictions, and, if I may use the expression, to all the desolation which was inseparable from such a destiny. What joy could she feel from that moment? or what alleviation of her anguish could she receive? During the whole time that she bore the Divine Infant in her womb, that she nourished Him at her breast, that she saw him grow up—the heart-rending thought that He was growing up for sacrifice, was ever before her mind. She could not banish the dreadful images of the Garden of Olives, the Hall of Judgment, and Calvary. All that gives consolation to ordinary mothers was changed into torments for her. When He held forth His innocent hands she must have fancied that she already saw them loaded with the chains which were to bind Him, or pierced with the nails which were to fasten Him to an infamous gibbet upon a future day. When He smiled upon His mother, or directed a glance of affection towards her, or solicited her caresses, she figured to herself by a heart-rending anticipation, His eyes closed and dying, His countenance bathed in blood

* *John* iii. 16. † *Ephes.* ii. 4.

and tears, His whole body torn, and presenting one continued wound. This was a continuous martyrdom which every moment renewed, and which love alone enabled her to endure. But why should I mention her endurance? See her actually co-operating in the sufferings of that adorable Son, and becoming, for our sakes, the minister of the rigorous designs of his Father in His regard. Did she not deliver Him to the knife of circumcision, that His blood may begin to flow for us even then? Did she not carry Him in her arms to the temple, to offer Him as our victim there, and thus solemnly devote Him to death, and to hear the assurance that she had nothing to expect but the most crushing afflictions, until the sword of grief should pierce her heart at last? *Et tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius.**

If I may add to the Gospel narrative, that which I have probable grounds for conjecturing to have been the subject of the intimate and familiar conversations of Jesus and Mary, duringthirty years, in their retreat at Nazareth, must it not have been that very passion about which he constantly spoke to His disciples, and which always engrossed His thoughts? What afflicting conversations must not these have been to a mother! What deep wounds must not every such discourse have inflicted upon her heart? And yet she never had the weakness of exclaiming with St. Peter, *Lord, be it far from Thee; this shall not be done unto Thee.*† On the contrary, she adds new ardour to the burning desires of her Son; they both drank together, they both drained the bitter draught of that dreadful chalice, and they encouraged each other to drink it to the very dregs, in order thereby to procure our salvation. Need we refer to any other proofs of this besides the manner in which she acted when that fatal hour had come! Alas! my sisters, what a sad spectacle is now presented to our view! and who can behold it without emotion! The Son of man is condemned to death; overwhelmed beneath the most degrading treatment, His blood and strength exhausted, laden with a heavy cross, under which He is often forced to sink, He is rather dragged than conducted to the place of execution. The pious women who are aware of His innocence, and who see Him reduced to such a frightful extremity, are unable to restrain their groans; they fill the air with their piteous lamentations.‡ But, where is His Mother? Has she fled far from the scene of where such an awful tragedy is prepared? Has she gone to bury her deep and intolerable anguish in concealment?

* *Luke* ii. 35. † *Matt.* xvi. 22. ‡ *Luke* xxiii. 27.

Has she remained dying and desolate at home? Ah! she is beside the victim; she ascends the mountain of sacrifice in company with Him; and the Gospel does not tell us that she even wept. She sees the executioners strip her Son, and stretch Him unmercifully upon the fatal wood; she sees them bury the nails in His hands and feet, with repeated blows; she sees His tears flowing, and His blood streaming on every side; she hears His sighs and groans mingled with the shouts of rage and the savage insults of his enemies. She does not stand at a distance from this heart-rending spectacle, like the holy women and the other friends of the Saviour, for *all His acquaintance and the women stood afar off;** but she is at the very foot of the cross, in the midst of the hideous array of torture, amidst the soldiers and executioners, and so close beside her expiring Son that no portion of His sufferings can escape her. But perhaps the very excess of her sorrow has deprived her of all consciousness; perhaps she is no longer in a condition to discern anything; a dark veil has covered her eyes, or else she has fallen fainting and lifeless to the earth. Oh, amazing wonder! My dear sisters, the Mother of Jesus stands in the attitude of a priest while offering sacrifice before that altar upon which the mighty holocaust is consumed. *Stabat juxta crucem Jesu mater ejus.*† Whilst Jesus offers Himself to His Father in expiation of sin, His mother offers Him also to His Father for the same end. She consents to His torments, to His ignominy, to His death, that we may obtain forgiveness. She entreats an offended God to wreak His vengeance on that innocent Lamb, and to spare us. See to what an extent has the heart of Mary loved us. So much were we the exclusive objects of the thoughts of both the Son and the Mother at this awful moment, that Jesus, addressing his dying words from the cross to Mary, speaks neither of her nor Himself, but of us alone. He sees beside Him one of His disciples who represents all the rest; He makes him our representative, and presents us all to Mary in his person, saying to her, *Woman, behold thy son.*‡ "Second Eve, behold thy family; thou alone shalt be henceforth the true *mother of all the living*,§ of all my disciples; thou hast given them birth to-day in the excess of the most inconceivable anguish; and in thee shall the prediction which had been made to the first woman be fulfilled to its fullest extent—*in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.*‖ They have cost thee too dearly that they should not be thine. I give

* *Luke* xxiii. 49. † *John* xix. 25. ‡ *Ibid.* 26.
§ *Gen.* iii. 20. ‖ *Ibid.* iii. 16.

them to thee now. Love them even as thou hast loved Myself. And you also, My disciples, learn to love your mother; to you I transfer all my claims upon her; have recourse to her love in all your necessities; though she has not borne you in her womb she bears you at present in her heart. She has loved you more than she has loved the life of her only Son; and if anything could equal my affection for you it would be hers. *Ecce mater tua.*"*

O Mary! such are our claims, and such is the security upon which we rely for the affection of thy heart towards us. We are thy children—the children of thy excessive anguish; and we shall always place the most unbounded reliance upon thy maternal affection for us. Into whatever abyss we may fall, we shall never despair as long as we are enabled to invoke thy name. Thou art not endued with that omnipotence which commands and which effects whatever it pleases; but thou hast that "omnipotence of supplication" which obtains whatsoever it demands. Who has not experienced the effects of thy protection! How often has it been displayed by miracles on behalf of the Church, of states, of kingdoms, and of all who have implored thy assistance! Those virgins who hear me are indebted to thy intercession for that favour which is most precious in their eyes: and the homage which they pay to thy sacred heart this day is dictated by gratitude. We join with them to day in casting ourselves at thy feet, or rather in seeking refuge within thy heart, which is open as a safe retreat whither our enemies cannot pursue us. Alas! such as we are, mortals here below, simple, faithful priests of the Lord, or persons consecrated to God, we all groan beneath an oppressive weight of misery. We bear in frail bodies, which are liable to unnumbered evils, souls that are more feeble still, and liable to disorders which are far more fatal. We invoke thee, support of the weak! health of the infirm! *Salus infirmorum.* This life is fruitful in reverses of fortune, in disgraces and calamities; there is scarce an eye that has not tears to shed, or a heart exempt from anguish and affliction. We invoke thee, comfortress of the afflicted! *Consolatrix afflictorum.* Is there one of us who can presume to say that he is innocent and spotless in the eyes of the Lord! Is there one of us who is not accountable to the Divine Justice in some respect? Some are still enslaved by their passions; others are the sport of most deplorable illusions; others who have returned from their evil ways are terrified by the recollection of their past

* *John* xix. 27.

disorders; others, in fine, have reason to reproach themselves with less grievous but daily transgressions, with faults which are trifling but never corrected. We acknowledge that we are all sinful creatures, and we invoke thee, refuge of sinners! *Refugium peccatorum.* We have all embarked upon a stormy ocean; we sail in frail barks, in the midst of dangers, often uncertain of the course we ought to steer, but too certain of suffering an awful and irreparable shipwreck if we fail to enter the only haven of salvation. Overcome with fear, we invoke thee, help of Christians in distress! *Auxilium Christianorum.* We shall not perish, O mother of mercy! thou art the star which will guide us through so many dangers, to that haven of bliss where our hearts, united to thine, shall enjoy an eternal rest in the bosom of God after all the toil and anguish of this sorrowful pilgrimage. *Amen.*

DISCOURSE ON THE IMITATION OF MARY AND ELIZABETH.

DELIVERED IN THE CHAPEL OF THE NUNS OF THE VISITATION, AT CHAMBERY, AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE AUTHOR'S FIRST MASS, ON THE 2ND OF JULY, 1814, BEING THE FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"This day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice therein."—*Psalm* cxvii. 24.

THESE words, my dear sisters, are not so much the text of a discourse as an exclamation of love and gratitude which escapes from the bottom of my heart. What a day for you and for me also is this on which I address you! For you, it is a day replete with the most agreeable and affecting recollections. It recalls the memory of your primitive institution, your illustrious origin, the name which you have received from your holy founder, the rule which he has given you, the tie which binds together the happy daughters of Francis de Sales, and unites them all to the Queen of Virgins, who, upon this festival, has become their patroness and their mother. But this day, which is so auspicious for you, my sisters, is a day of thanksgiving and benediction for me also. It is the day on which I have held my Lord and my God, for the first time, in my trembling hands; it is the day on which, after having been consecrated a priest, to offer in sacrifice the Lamb without

stain, after having been sprinkled with His blood, I have elevated that adorable victim to the Father of Mercies and the God of all consolation ; it is also the day on which my tongue is unloosed for the first time in the house of the Lord to announce the tidings of salvation to souls that love them. What happiness it is for me thus to enter upon my ministry in the midst of the spouses of Jesus Christ, in this asylum of recollection and peace, in this sanctuary of the purest virtues! What still greater happiness to commence it under the auspices of Mary, and from this day forward to place all its future career under her powerful protection! Thou knowest, O holy Virgin! how highly I prize this great favour from on high, what confidence I have placed in thee, how I love to make thee this offering of the first-fruits of my priesthood and of all my labours, how I sigh for the moment when I shall be enabled to proclaim thy praises at the foot of the sacred altars, and how I am resolved to consecrate all the labours of my life to thy glory next to that of God. Vouchsafe, therefore, to assist me, and to sustain my weakness in this first effort which I am about to make in thy honour.

My sisters, offer your prayers in union with me, and let us all repeat *Ave Maria, &c.*

You must not expect a regular discourse from me upon this day of delightful agitation and profound emotion. It will satisfy your piety if I propose to you, without pursuing any precise order for our mutual edification, some short and simple reflections which are suggested by the mystery we now celebrate.

Let us go in spirit, my sisters, to the house of Zachary and Elizabeth. There, as well as here, all are absorbed in affection and joy. It is the arrival of Mary which occasions such transports there. No sooner has she arrived—no sooner has her voice been heard there, than Elizabeth feels the infant which she bore, to leap, and being completely enlightened by the Holy Spirit, she exclaims: "Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Oh, my sisters, what humility, what faith is comprised in these few words? Elizabeth, the holy mother of the precursor, who had been overwhelmed by so many graces—she whom an Angel had come down from heaven to visit, and who had miraculously become pregnant in her old age, even she is astonished that Mary condescended to enter her dwelling. She forgets every privilege to which she was entitled by ties of blood, by the reverence due to her age, and the stupendous miracles which had been wrought in her behalf during the previous six months; and, as

she regarded nothing except the extraordinary virtues of the youthful virgin and her incomprehensible dignity in becoming the Mother of God, she can only humble herself and be confounded; she is incapable of comprehending how the Mother of the Redeemer could have thought her worthy of visiting her. "Whence have I obtained this dignity? upon what title can I aspire to it?" *Unde hoc mihi ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me?**

Alas! my sisters, are we who are so far removed from the sanctity of Elizabeth, endowed with as much humility as she has been? Are we capable of feeling astonishment as great as hers at the kindness with which the Mother of God favours us, or the love which she manifests towards us? And yet how much has she done for us already? How deeply are not you indebted to her, you in particular, my sisters? Has she not adopted you under her special protection from your most tender childhood? Has she not guided you, as it were, by the hand, through the perils of early childhood to that very hour in which you have been received into the number of her beloved children? Is it not she who has sheltered you from the storms of the world in this house which is peculiarly her own? Has she not sheltered you, like timid doves, in her bosom? Has she not caused the milk and honey of divine consolation to flow for you? And whilst the foundations of the moral world seemed to have been shaken to their centre during those years of terror which have so lately passed away—whilst turbulence and alarm reigned everywhere around you, has not a river of peace and joy continually watered this land of promise in which you dwell? *Fluminis impetus lætificat civitatem Dei.*† Mary is therefore amongst you, my sisters; and not content with visiting you, she has taken up her abode in the midst of you. No, she never leaves you. It is she who alleviates your afflictions, sustains your strength, makes you victorious over every temptation, and she will not cease to afford you her protection until she shall have transferred you from this blessed asylum to the immortal city of the living God. Ah! with how much reason, then, must not every one of you exclaim with Elizabeth, "Whence is so great happiness to me?" *Unde hoc mihi?* Why have I been chosen from the midst of so many others of my age and sex who have already perished, or hasten onward to their ruin, bewildered by their passions, and borne away by the torrent of worldly illusions in which the

* *Luke* i. 43.

† "The stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful."—*Ps.* xlv. 5.

children of this world are swallowed up, with their vain hopes and extravagant desires? Have I been worthy of such preference which is so favourable, and, as I have good grounds for hoping, so decisive for my salvation? Alas! have I always even estimated its value as highly as I ought to have done? Has it never happened that, being wearied with the yoke of obedience, with the holy rigour of my rule, with those privations which religion enjoins, with the uniform tenor of this agreeable and quiet life, I may have given way for some moments to unwarrantable dislike, and suffered at least some trifling regret for the false goods which I have abandoned? How, then, does it come to pass, that notwithstanding all my weakness, and all my unfaithfulness, the Mother of God still continues to lavish all her favours upon me with the most tender care? *Unde hoc mihi ut veniat mater Domini mei ad me?*

It is by such sentiments we shall imitate the grateful humility of Elizabeth. But, let us also admire her lively faith. No sooner has the Holy Spirit poured a ray of his light upon her soul than she believes, and at the same moment makes a public profession of her belief in that most stupendous of all mysteries. She acknowledges Mary to be the Mother of her Creator, although no exterior mark announced such sublime dignity in that poor but modest Virgin; she hesitates not to proclaim her blessed among women; she praises and adores the Divine fruit of her womb. Elizabeth is, therefore, the first who rose above the evidence of the senses, and rendered homage to the presence of the hidden and invisible Saviour. We are also obliged to make a similar exercise of faith every day of our lives: for the same God our Saviour is now no less concealed, and no less present than He has been in the womb of His Blessed Mother. That virginal womb was the first and most worthy sanctuary of the incarnate Word; but it contained nothing more than what we still possess in our tabernacles, what we adore upon our altars, what the priests hold in their hands, and the faithful receive into their hearts at the Holy Communion. We believe all this; and God forbid that we should ever entertain the slightest doubt upon so precious a doctrine of our religion; but is our faith as lively as that of Elizabeth? Is it animated by a charity equally ardent as hers? Do our hearts leap with joy at the sight of the adorable Sacrament as the womb of Elizabeth was moved at the mere sound of Mary's voice?

Ah! my sisters, the children of this world may enter our temples without the least emotion; they may assist at the Divine sacrifice without any sentiments of veneration or love;

I feel more grieved than astonished at their conduct; they are ignorant of our mysteries; they look upon our ceremonies as an empty pomp; they cannot comprehend the amiable and awful majesty which is concealed beneath an humble exterior; and to them may be said with truth what John the Baptist said to the Jews, *In the midst of you is one whom you know not.** But if we who are the ministers of this God-made man, and you who are His spouses—we to whom His secrets have been confided and who are the special objects of His love—we who have been admitted to the most intimate familiarity with Him—who have so often eaten His flesh and drunk His blood—shall we remain cold and insensible in His presence? Where else must He go to obtain respect? From whom can He expect the tribute of love and gratitude, if we refuse it? Oh! I beseech you, let us revive our drooping faith; let us light up within our hearts that fire of holy desires which is expiring within them. Oh! my dear sisters! if we returned to this holy spouse the love which He feels for us, if we correspond with the sentiments which He entertains towards us, what ineffable sweetness should we not taste here at His feet! with how great joy, with what pure delights would we not be inebriated whenever we partake of His heavenly banquet! how delicious would we not feel that heavenly manna with which He nourishes hungry souls! how agreeable and how easy would not everything seem to us as w ecame forth from His union and embrace! how our pains would be changed into pleasures, our labour into repose, and our most bitter tears into the sweet tears of divine consolation! Alas! shall we never be able to estimate the extent of the advantage and happiness of which we deprive ourselves by our coldness and indifference? Who then shall arouse us from our lethargy? Oh! Emmanuel! Oh, Son of the living God! Son of Mary! effect in this house today what Thou didst effect in the house of Zachary. Pour upon our hearts that light with which Thou didst enlighten Elizabeth, that we may duly appreciate the value of Thy visit, impart to us in particular the efficacious unction of thy grace. May the new man conceived within our hearts leap with the same joy as that whose transports Thy precursor felt in his mother's womb; may our tongues be unloosed as that of Zachary was unloosed immediately after; and may they all be united together in a never-ending harmony of praises in Thy honour, that being filled with delight and astonishment at obtaining so many favours in a day, we may acknowledge that we

* *John* i. 26.

owe them to the intercession of Mary; and never more ceasing to glorify this incomparable virgin, we may say to her, with an affection ever new—yes! blessed art thou amongst all women; blessed art thou amongst all creatures; and the fruit of thy chaste womb is, indeed, the author of every blessing and every good gift.

But, my sisters, now that we have repeated the words of Elizabeth, shall we not listen to Mary herself? Yes, yes, my sisters, it is she can speak the language of every virtue, of humility the most perfect, faith the most enlightened, and love the most sublime. She replies to the address of her holy relative, not in human words but in a divine canticle, which is more worthy of resounding through the heavens, above all the choirs of Angels, than to be heard upon this earth. *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; because He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name.** Observe, my sisters, how everything is referred to God alone; how the glory of His gifts returns to Him without diminution; how the humble handmaid claims nothing for herself except the happiness of having gained favour in the sight of God; with what raptures of delight, with what agreeable transports of gratitude, does she not proclaim that if He who is mighty hath done great things in her regard, the glory is due to Him alone, as to Him alone belong all power and holiness! *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est, et sanctum nomen ejus.* Oh! admirable model of the most profound humility in the midst of the most amazing greatness! It is incumbent on us, my sisters, to do all in our power to imitate this most perfect model; for we must confess that the Lord hath done great things to ourselves, and it would be ingratitude in us not to acknowledge it. He hath done great things to us when He brought us out of nothing, and formed us to His own likeness—when He made us the living temples of His Holy Spirit in baptism—when He washed us so often in the life-giving Bethsaida which purifies our souls, and reinstates them in that beauteous splendour of innocence of which sin had deprived them—when He has, as it were, elevated us to the rank of divinities by incorporating us in the Eucharist with the very flesh of His Son. He hath done great things to you, my sisters, when He separated you from a reprobate world, to form you in solitude to the practice of the sublimest virtues

* *Luke* i. 46—49.

—when He chose you as His spouses, inspired you with the design of living like angels in mortal bodies, and gave you strength to accomplish that holy resolution; when He called you to merit that crown of glory which will point out the distinction for all eternity between virgins and the other blessed inhabitants of heaven. Shall I declare it? He hath also done great things to myself, unworthy as I am, by selecting me so recently from amidst the crowd of the faithful, and elevating me to the dignity of his ministers, by engraving upon my soul, through the sacred unction, and the effusion of the Holy Spirit, the indelible character of His priesthood, and investing me with that sacred character which alarms and confounds me. Wherefore, we should not hesitate to proclaim with Mary that He who is mighty hath done great things to us. But let us also be careful to add that He hath performed them of His own free will; that they are the work of His gratuitous goodness, no less than of His Sovereign power; that, for our part, all we have brought Him is our nothingness and misery, our unworthiness and our sins. Let us confess that He alone is holy; that, for our part, so far from being entitled to His favours, we deserve nothing but His chastisement if He were disposed to exercise the prerogatives of His justice in our regard. *Fecit magna et sanctum nomen ejus.* Ah! woe be to us—woe to our very virtues and good works—if we presume to arrogate anything to ourselves. Better for us that we never had been sharers in the gifts of the Lord than to dispute the glory of them with Him after having received them—thus to wound His jealousy which we should fear, and even to convert blessings into maledictions for ourselves. Let us impress upon our minds the threats with which the remaining part of the canticle of Mary is filled against the proud—against those who are wealthy in their own estimation, and who rely upon their own strength. The arm of Omnipotence crushes them, divests them of all they possess, and hurls them from the throne of pride on which they had been seated. *Dispersit superbos—deposuit potentes.** On the other hand, all His mercies are reserved for those humble souls that fear Him, for the little ones whom He hath been pleased to raise up from the dust, and for the poor whom He overwhelms with His favours. *Esurientes implevit bonis; exaltavit humiles.*†

* "He hath scattered the proud; He hath put down the mighty."—*Luke* i. 52.

† "He hath filled the hungry with good things; He hath exalted the humble."—*Luke* i. 52, 53.

Would that I were now able to develop all the other instructions which this admirable canticle contains. But, my sisters, are you not most intimately acquainted with it already? Does it not form the subject of your most ordinary meditations? Do you not sing it every day of your lives? Oh, daughters of Francis De Sales! how happy is your lot, thus to be able to devote yourselves in peace to such holy occupations; how agreeable is your retirement; how usefully are your days employed; how enviable is your lot. Whilst the short-sighted children of this world imagine that indolence and disquiet reign through your solitudes, you are actually engaged in uniting your voices with those of the Angels; these heavenly spirits, attracted by your concerts, descend into the midst of you; and even in this land of exile you sing with delight the hymns of your immortal country. Oh! how different are the pleasures of the world from those which you enjoy. We know this wicked and foolish world too well; we have seen too much of its glittering toys, its boisterous and profane merriment, its treacherous prosperity, and the fascinating imposture of its vanities. What have we most frequently brought away from its most brilliant societies but sadness, disgust, and a void which this world cannot fill?

It is not thus with Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! They are beloved the more in proportion as they are frequented, because in them peace, and innocence, and happiness have fixed their abode with Thee. *Quam dilecta tabernacula tua Domine virtutum.** As long as I have lived at a distance from the sacred precincts of Thy temple, my soul, enfeebled by the ardour of its desires, has wasted away; my heart has sighed after Thee; and my very body has been moved by thy love, and hastened with ardour towards the God of my life. Ah, Lord! the sparrow pursued by the storm hath found a shelter; the timid dove finds, in her nest, repose and security for her little ones, which she warms in her bosom. *Etenim passer invenit sibi domum et turtur nidum sibi.*† For my part, O my God! I wish for no other asylum than Thy sanctuary and Thy altars. There only do I desire to enjoy a sacred repose beneath the shadow of Thy wings; there do I desire to live at the foot of the throne of my King; there do I ardently long to expire in the bosom of my God. *Altaria tua, Domine, virtutum, rex meus et Deus meus.*‡ Oh, dear Lord! they who inhabit thy dwelling-place alone enjoy true happiness. There Thy praises resound; there Thy benedictions are lavished; there virtues

* *Ps.* lxxxiii. 2. † *Ibid.* 3. ‡ *Ibid.* 4.

receive an origin and increase; there, there alone even tears are agreeable; even humiliation is honourable; and a single day spent there in Thy presence is more valuable than a thousand years wasted upon the empty joys of this present life.

In conclusion, my dear sisters, let us draw those ties which bind us to the house of our God still more closely together. Renew your most holy resolutions upon this day; redouble your fervour; rely with the most unbounded confidence upon the mercy of Him who giveth grace and glory. He will bless every effort which you shall make to observe His law with perfection; seeing the purity of your intentions, He will bestow upon you every help and favour with a bounteous profusion; He will help you in your ascent from virtue to virtue, until you shall reach the summit of that blessed Sion where He communicates Himself to His elect without reserve.

May we all attain this consummation of our desires, my dear sisters; and may we be united together for all eternity, in the bosom of Jesus and Mary, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

SERMON ON THE SACRIFICES AND REWARDS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

PREACHED AT A RELIGIOUS RECEPTION ON THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"We are made a spectacle to the world, and to Angels, and to men."—1 *Corinth.* iv. 9.

SMALL as this edifice is within which we are assembled, I venture to assert, my brethren, that this pious and affecting ceremony which is now about to be celebrated within its precincts, is a spectacle worthy of the attention of heaven and earth. A youthful victim still equipped in the ornaments of the world, and impatient to divest herself of them, that she may clothe herself with the robe of sacrifice—relatives upon whom religion exercises a stronger influence than nature, and who do not shrink from surrounding the altar upon which the rights of flesh and blood are about to be sacrificed generously to Divine love—a venerable minister of religion preparing to bless those sacred symbols of Christian poverty, humility, and chastity, which are about to be substituted for the trappings of worldly vanity—the Church, which rejoices because she still brings forth virgins, even in the days of her old age, and glories, in such auspicious proof of her never-failing fecundity—the Angels, who invisibly hasten to this feast, and crowd around the future spouse of Jesus Christ, inquiring, "Who is this privileged soul that aspires to the nuptials of the Lamb, and who already ascends above the earth by the desire of a life which is all heavenly?" *Quæ est ista quæ ascendit?**—and

* *Canticle of Canticles* viii. 5.

the Son of God Himself who seems to call her whom He has chosen, and to address her in these words—"Come, my beloved —come to receive from my hands a robe of glory and a crown of immortality." *Veni sponsa mea—veni, coronaberis.** Can any spectacle be more sublime, more interesting, more worthy the attention of the whole universe? *Spectaculum facti sumus mundo et angelis et hominibus.*

However, my dear sister, this day which is so glorious to you is not yet the day of your triumph and happiness. It is only a prelude to the great sacrifice which your heart has long since burned to consummate. Upon this day, you separate yourself from the world, but you do not yet erect an insurmountable barrier between yourself and that world; you assume the sacred and honourable livery of the Lord, but are not yet bound to Him by ties that can never more be broken. An interval of probation and of serious reflection is destined to prepare you for those solemn engagements which shall establish you in the inheritance and the house of your God for ever. It is your duty to meditate upon such an important resolution at your leisure, in order that you may ascertain whether your strength is adequate to the obligations of a holy and austere state of life, that you may compare the trials and the consolations of a life which is so far removed above that of the senses; and that you may fairly balance all that you leave with all that is promised to you in religion.

My dear sister, it is my duty to assist you in this deliberation, on which your interests, both of time and eternity, depend. It devolves upon me to furnish you at present with the subject matter of your future deliberations. I shall, therefore, unite with you in examining what sacrifices it costs to follow so sublime a vocation, and what advantages you may expect from it—what you offer to God, and what you may hope to obtain in return from His liberality. I shall show you, in the first place, that the sacrifice which is offered by a religious soul is the most perfect and the most unlimited that a creature can offer to its Creator; and, secondly, that the rewards which are promised to a religious soul are the greatest and the most magnificent which even the Creator Himself can bestow as a recompense upon the devotedness of His creatures.

O, Queen of Virgins, who dost guide those chaste doves through the solitude of the desert, to the everlasting mansion of their spouse—guardian of all those peaceful asylums where innocence takes refuge, in order to escape from the corruption

* *Canticle of Canticles* iv. 8.

of the world—but, above all, the special patronage of a holy congregation which has borne thy name, and studied to propagate thy worship during the last two centuries—vouchsafe, upon this anniversary of thy birth, to cast a favourable look upon her who proposes to be born to a new and perfect life, and to walk in thy train, in the narrow path of the evangelical counsels. *Ave Maria, &c.*

1. I will not be suspected of any inclination to conceal the extent and the rigour of that sacrifice to which the religious soul is called, as I have announced it without reserve—and I expressly propose to maintain that it is the most perfect and unlimited sacrifice which a creature can offer to its Creator. If I be asked what does a soul renounce when she consecrates herself to God in religion, the Gospel does not allow me to make any other answer except that she renounces all without the least reservation or holding back. She practices, to the letter, all that our Divine Saviour requires of His most perfect disciples; that is to say, she abandons everything she possessed, and everything which is naturally dear to her; she abandons and disowns herself, as it were; she is satisfied to lose her soul in time, that she may find it again in eternity; finally, she buries herself alive, and places herself, to a certain extent, amongst the dead, in order that she may have no other life, except that which is hidden with Jesus Christ in God. A Christian virgin, therefore, is neither worthy of the name, nor animated with the true spirit of her vocation, if she cannot say with the Apostles, "O Lord, I have left all things, I have divested myself of all things to follow Thee." *Ecce nos reliquimus omnia, et secuti sumus te.** Let us consider the principal sacrifices which are included in this spiritual renunciation.

In the first place, the soul which devotes herself to religious perfection, not only renounces the corrupt maxims of the world, its criminal habits, its passions and its scandals, as we have all renounced them by the engagements of baptism, but she effectually breaks off all intercourse with it, and divests herself of all concern or regard for it. She feels no desire for the most honourable position in society, for the most lawful possessions, for its most deserved glory, for its most innocent pleasures. She comes away out of the midst of this profane world, as the Israelites, when released from their captivity of old, came out of Babylon, as Lot came forth from the burning Sodom. She closes her eyes once and for ever, to the fascination of its spectacles, to the vanity of its pomps, to all the

* *Matt.* xix. 27.

splendour of this *figure which passeth away;** she closes her ears to the boisterous tumult of its enjoyments, its entertainments, its societies, and its conversations; she closes her heart to the illusion of its hopes, to the turmoil of its pursuits and desires; she closes her whole soul against the torrent of its interests, its concerns, and its intrigues; she tramples upon all that it values and all that it esteems. She buries herself in solitude that she may forget it, and be forgotten by it. The world is crucified to her, and she is crucified to the world. *Mihi mundus crucifixus est et ego mundo.*†

Now, my brethren, how many things are renounced by the first act of separation from the world! How many privations are imposed upon the senses, the imagination, and the heart! How mighty is such a sacrifice for that human nature which is so desirous of everything which glitters and amuses, of every thing which is calculated to gratify curiosity, to flatter pride, or to appease the cravings of ambition. And yet this is only the first step which the religious soul makes in that career of renunciation upon which she enters; it is the least difficult among all her sacrifices, for, after all, how fascinating soever this world may seem, she must see at once the frivolity of its inclinations, the childish waywardness of its fashions and usages, the void which its pleasures leave behind them, the uncertainty of its prosperity, and the emptiness of its honours. She cannot be slow to perceive that everything in this world is mingled with bitterness; that the most affectionate unions have their own troubles; that riches are beset with thorns; that favour and interest demand subserviency, and that power and greatness expose those who enjoy them to many a snare. Experience teaches her that from the most elevated to the most obscure condition, no one is secure from the most sad vicissitudes; and that the loftiest fortunes are those which are oftenest exposed to the most melancholy reverses. She often hears the secret complaints and murmurs of those whose apparent prosperity excites the envy of some; and under the deceitful exterior of joy or happiness, she discovers weariness, dissatisfaction, and disgust at the bottom of every worldly heart.

But what still more forcibly induces her to fly from this world, which is no less wicked than it is frivolous and unhappy, is the reckless indifference which she witnesses with regard to the only important and necessary concern—the complete forgetfulness of man's first obligations towards his Creator—the

* 1 *Cor.* vii. 31. † *Galat.* vi. 14.

scandals of the world's vices, and the impiety of its doctrines. This depraved world to which I allude, is a vast society of men who, receiving their impressions from nothing except what strikes the outward senses, and altogether engrossed by perishable interests and foolish passions, blindly hasten onwards to inevitable death, regardless of what that death is, or what must follow it—who shamefully sacrifice that incorruptible soul which they have received from the hands of the Creator to the appetites of corruptible flesh—who, formed to the image of God Himself, degrade themselves, of their own will, to the level of the brute, and place their glory in their shame. How could a soul who is enlightened by the light of faith and enamoured with the charms of virtue, feel contented in the midst of a world which outrages modesty, despises religion, persecutes piety, calumniates the Gospel, and mocks even God Himself! How could she feel reconciled to the revolting indecencies of its dresses, the unrestrained licentiousness of its evil habits, the audacity and the impunity of its blasphemies! Alas! all that she sees, and all that she hears, is only calculated to excite her tears and lamentations. She ceases not to pray for the wings of the dove, that she may fly far from the region of iniquity and death, and seek in the desert for that rest which she cannot enjoy amidst the tents of sinners. *Quis dabit mihi pennas sicut columbæ? et volabo et requiescam.**

If there were merely question of forsaking the world, a soul who is influenced by the love of God would feel but little difficulty in determining to make this sacrifice; but she must sever ties which are far more tender; and this is the second degree of her renunciation. She has heard the words of her Divine Master, *He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me;*† and those other declarations which are still more severe—*Do you think that I came to send peace upon earth? I came not to send peace but the sword; for I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.*‡ O, truly afflicting separation! heart-rending trial! How much have the saints themselves suffered in those terrible conflicts between nature and grace! How many real and supernatural vocations have been utterly destroyed in hearts that were too affectionate, by the cries of flesh and blood! The heroic Thereaa declares that she felt her heart rent asunder when she tore herself away from the arms of her father; and all the virtue of Frances of Chantal was scarce sufficient to sustain her in a similar conflict—so strong and so deep are the roots which are

* *Ps.* liv. 7. † *Matt.* x. 37. ‡ *Ibid.* 34, 35.

sunk in our hearts by those affections which have been born with us, and which are strengthened by habit, and the mutual exhibitions of tenderness which have been interwoven with our finest feelings, with our very duties, and identified, as it were, with our very existence!

Here it is, then, that the soul who has been called to religious perfection must arm herself with courage and fortitude. She must consider that if a jealous God requires such a sacrifice at her hands, a mortal spouse would also demand it; that the service of a sovereign, the expectations of fortune, the projects of a family, and a variety of other interests, daily separate children from their parents, whilst no one murmurs at such a separation; that it would be most extraordinary if religion alone was not entitled to command what is lawfully enjoined by so many other motives; that, moreover, a Christian virgin is not required to cross the seas, nor to place an immense distance between herself and those whom she loves so deservedly; that the cloister does not make her altogether unvisited and unseen by them; that when she deprives herself of what is superfluous, or too indulgent to nature, in her intercourse with society, she does not lose all concern for their interests, nor is she forbidden to love them; and that even natural tenderness becomes far more ardent, and more active, and incomparably more useful to those who are the objects of it, when it is converted into Divine charity. O, my God, do Thou impress upon the minds of those relations whose hearts are so deeply affected at this moment, how great a treasure a family gains when they yield up even one of its members to Thee, to be Thy portion and Thy inheritance, what blessings it brings down upon all they undertake, what consolations it obtains for them in the bitter afflictions of life, what protection it affords them in every danger! Thou alone knowest, O my God, how many calamities which were ready to burst upon them are averted by her prayers, how many precious graces flow into their souls from such a source. Oh, how limited are the views of man! Jacob mourns the death of his son Joseph, who had disappeared from his sight; and inconsolable at such a loss he exclaims that his gray hairs would go down with sorrow to the grave. Yet, Joseph is living; and O, my God, Thou hast taken him away from the affection of such a tender father, for no other purpose than to make him the support, the nursing father, the saviour of his family, and of all his people in the day of their distress. And thus it is, my dear sister, that those who weep over you to-day, as if you were lost to them, will continue even to the end of their lives, and

afterwards for all eternity, to receive the fruit of that generous sacrifice which you are now about to offer to the Lord.

But we have not yet considered the full extent of this sacrifice. The religious soul is not content with avoiding the world, and severing the most agreeable ties of nature. After these first victories, another still more astonishing one remains to be gained. He who has chosen her and called her, has said, *If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross.* This is the last degree of abnegation; and it is so sublime, that without the Divine lessons of the Gospel, we should never be able to comprehend even the meaning of such language. That a soul should separate herself from all she regards and loves outside herself, however great and difficult it is, may yet be conceived; but to lose and divest one's self, I will not say of what a person possesses, or of what constitutes a portion of existence, but of one's entire being—to abjure and renounce one's self—to treat one's self as a stranger and almost as an enemy—to make a divorce from nature itself, to assail it, to subdue it, to persecute it, and as much as possible to annihilate it—to be at the same time the victim that is offered, and the minister of the sacrifice—to make that sword, of which St. Paul speaks, penetrate into the very marrow of the bones, into the inmost recesses of the heart, where affections and desires fix their deepest roots—to the incomprehensible *division of the soul and the spirit*:* this is what surpasses all the thoughts of man, and is the triumph and the prodigy of the grace of God in the soul of man.

And yet, all this has been done with the assistance of that Divine grace, by all these true servants of Jesus Christ who have been concealed from the world, of whom the world is not worthy. They live detached from their own persons and interests—dead and crucified to themselves. Is there anything to which their self-renunciation does not extend? They renounce their senses, which they mortify and afflict by the universal privation of everything that can flatter those senses, by the abandonment of all the enjoyments, and all the conveniences of life, by fasts, abstinences, watchings, and the other austerities of the cloister. They renounce their liberty which they hold fettered and confined within the narrow limits of a sacred asylum, which, by their own choice, has been converted into their prison and their tomb. They renounce their judgment and their will, which they reduce to subjection, and which they place, by a formal vow, beneath the

* *Hebr.* iv. 12.

yoke of the most blind obedience. They renounce their own talents, and reserve no right to exercise them for their own glory, or their personal gratification. They even renounce their virtues to a certain extent by humbly turning away their attention from them, and by suffering them to remain for ever buried in the deep obscurity of their retreat. What, then, remains of all they ever possessed? or rather what part of themselves remains that is not sacrificed and annihilated?

Oh! worldlings who hear me, if the severity of such an absolute and rigorous sacrifice alarms you, reflect upon the melancholy slavery to which those persons are devoted who follow the inclination of their senses, their caprices, and their passions; and you will, perhaps, agree in opinion with me, that to release one's self by one generous effort from such a degrading slavery, to overcome nature, and to lay every inclination prostrate with a single stroke, is to regain the dignity of our being, and to enter upon the only true path of liberty and happiness.

Alas! this truth was better appreciated in former days. These instances of religious devotedness which astonish us at present on account of their rare occurrence, were then quite common, and excited no surprise. The rich and the powerful of this world often divested themselves of their dignities and treasures, in order to enrich themselves by the remuneration of the Gospel; and our fathers have seen illustrious princesses descending the steps of the throne to take their place amongst the humble followers of a crucified God. Almost every family gave its own pledge to religion, and paid its tribute to the Lord. Our cities and our rural districts were filled with these schools of perfect virtue, these houses of immolation and penance, where victims offered themselves by night and day as voluntary holocausts to the Lord, and where a perpetual harmony of praises ascended up to heaven. And what was the consequence? That heaven was favourable; that seeing in the midst of us, as it were, what outweighed our guilt, it did not chastise us in its wrath; that the state prospered, and our name was great and respected amongst the nations. But ever since our fury has overturned the asylums of piety, and outrageously dispersed those solitaries and virgins who had taken upon themselves the expiation of our faults, and silenced their prayers, and dried up those sources from which the Divine mercies flowed amongst us, the torrent of calamity, as well as of vice, has overflowed upon an impious generation; our misfortunes seemed beyond recovery, and the miracles of the right hand of the Almighty have been necessary to restore us even to hope. Be Thou ever blessed, O great God! for these prodi-

gies of Thy goodness by which Thou hast been pleased to restore to us those who alone are able to repair the ruin and to heal the deep wounds which we have endured. May they fulfil that heavenly mission which Thou hast confided to them. May they save their country. May they restore our ancient and sacred institutions. May they secure our prosperity by uniting it with Thy glory, and make public prosperity rest upon its only solid foundation—that of a Divine religion.

Having now shown that the sacrifice which is offered by a religious soul is the most perfect and the most unlimited that a creature can offer to its Creator, we shall show next that the rewards which are promised to a religious soul are the greatest and the most magnificent which even the Creator Himself can bestow as a recompense upon the devotedness of His creatures.

II. I feel it unnecessary to remind you that the magnificent rewards to which I have just referred, are not intended for every one who embraces a sacred institution, and who enters, by the vows of religion, into the society of the spouses of Jesus Christ. The promises of God are never addressed to the tepid and the negligent, how perfect soever their professions may be. Such promises contemplate none except the truly fervent souls who bring to those holy engagements upright and pure intentions, a sincere detachment from the things of this world, an effective and persevering inclination of renouncing one's self, of crucifying one's self, and of living for God alone during the time to come. But I maintain that a soul of this latter character shall experience in religion the most admirable effects of the liberality of Him who cannot suffer Himself to be overcome in generosity by His creature. She gives Him all that she possesses, and He will lavish upon her all His favours in return. She gives Him herself—oh, ineffable wonder!—and He will also give Himself to her without reserve. Oh! that it were now in my power to describe the extensive picture of the happiness of which she partakes, and to make a complete enumeration of the favours which she enjoys. Such favours as enraptured the soul of the great Apostle, and made him declare with a noble disdain that he regarded everything else as mere dross.

The first benefit which she derives from her sacrifice is the peace of the Holy Ghost. By this I do not mean that exterior peace and tranquillity which nothing can disturb in a sacred abode which closed against the noise and tumult of the world, out of which hatred, jealousy, and dissension are banished—where charity, which is the bond of peace, governs and directs

all things—and where silence is seldom interrupted, save by the voice of prayer and the harmony of sacred hymns; but I understand that inward peace which erects its throne within the deepest recesses of the heart—which fills it with ineffable sweetness—which springs from an unlimited subjection of every faculty to order and regularity, from a complete victory over the passions, and from the testimony of a good conscience, which makes the soul fearless in dangers, courageous in affliction, and even undisturbed in the arms of death, because she bears within her an inexhaustible source of consolation, fortitude, and confidence. This is the peace which the world cannot give—a peace which must be always incompatible with sin which produces remorse, with pleasure which is followed by shame, with pride which elates the heart, with avarice and ambition which torment it, with all the disorderly passions which agitate and tear it asunder—a peace which, in particular, can never be found, according to the express declaration of the sacred Scriptures, in the gloomy soul of the sinner; for *there is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God.** If those who have embarked upon the troubled waters of this world were destitute of this blessing alone, it would be sufficient to make us feel concerned for them, and believe them to be unfortunate.

With this agreeable peace, another feeling, which is still more agreeable, is united in the religious and faithful soul. Why should she not rejoice? Her heart is a well-cultivated land, a garden blessed by the Lord, in which she never ceases to sow the seeds of every virtue—in which she sees those happy seeds grow up and extend themselves day after day, and bring forth flowers whose odour is pleasing to God Himself, and fruits, whose exquisite taste is felt by the saints above. Confined to this paradise of delights, she is ignorant of what is passing around her; she is a stranger to the events, the interests, the vicissitudes of this earth. Whilst the passions rage upon the theatre of the world, she advances with even and tranquil steps in the solitary paths of perfection; she ascends from one degree to another until she reaches the summit of the holy mountain. At every step she advances she sees the happy end to which she aspires gradually become nearer and nearer; and in the enthusiasm of happiness and love she already begins to attempt the hymns of never-ending joy. No, no; true happiness is not to be tasted in the poisoned chalice of profane pleasure, but in the pure delight of the soul

* *Isai.* lvii. 21.

which our Saviour compares to a spring of living waters which arise in the very heart of the just man, and which spring up into eternal life.*

The third reward of the soul which devotes herself entirely to God is union with the Deity. Ah, Lord! shouldst Thou not speak Thyself to make my hearers understand what is so highly elevated above all human reason and eloquence? Impart, at least, a few rays of Thy light to my intellect, and place some burning words upon my lips that I may be able to impart some feeble conception of the miracles of Thy condescension and love. The great God who has created us, my brethren, has formed us after His own image, and destined us to possess Himself. Such is the essential object of our being. By the very necessity of our nature, we tend towards this infinite good. This is the reason why our desires are without limits, and the hunger and thirst of our souls insatiable. We bear within us an immense void which the whole creation cannot satisfy, and which requires to be filled up by the possession of the Creator. This possession cannot be perfect here below. But the fervent soul who is detached from everything else, enters, even during the present life, into an ineffable union with Him whom she shall fully enjoy hereafter. It is in this union which is so glorious and so delicious in itself, that she finds all that she has abandoned again restored to her an hundred-fold. She is forgotten by creatures, but the eyes of God Himself are ever fixed upon her; she holds but little intercourse with man, but her conversation with heaven is never interrupted; she never enters the palaces of the great ones of this world, but she dwells in the mansions of the King of Glory; she is never seated at the delicate and sumptuous feasts of the wealthy; but she partakes of the table of the Lord; she eats the bread of the elect and drinks the wine which bringeth forth virgins; she possesses nothing, but she has found the hidden treasure and the precious pearl of the Gospel; she wears a poor and coarse habit, but she hath put on the Lord Jesus Christ; she is separated from her friends and relatives, but the Son of God Himself hath become her Father, her Friend, her Brother, and her Spouse; He visits her in time of prayer, He makes her hear His voice, He fills her with joy and consolation, He comes with the other Divine persons to take up His abode with her. She is, in a far more excellent manner than the ancient ark of the covenant, the

* *John* iv. 14.

seat and the throne of the Deity, who surrounds her and fills her with His light, inundates her with His graces, insensibly transforms her into His own resemblance, and imparts to her a beauty which is invisible to mortal eyes, but fills the Angels with delight. If this good Master is sometimes pleased to crown so many favours, by permitting some of that torrent of eternal delights, in which the elect are plunged, to impart its fertilizing and enlivening influence to her soul—to show her, as he did to St. Paul, what the eye of man hath not seen, and what is not granted to man to utter—how great must be her transport and delight in such blissful moments? Senseless world! do you imagine that she then envies your trifles, your toys, your empty vapours, and this impure phantom of happiness which ends in the corruption of the grave? She is placed upon an eminence from whence she regards the whole earth as a grain of sand or mire. What do you possess or what can you offer her in exchange for the very least of these blessings which she enjoys in her intercourse with her Creator?

The fourth and the last reward which is reserved for her is the triumph of the last day and the possession of the kingdom of God. That day shall at length arrive when the Spouse of virgins shall appear surrounded with glory, and majesty, and power, above the ruins of this world. His cross will appear before Him, and all the generations of men will be assembled at His feet. He will then command with a loud voice; He will separate the crowd, and place around Him upon thrones all those who shall have abandoned all to follow Him. Oh! how happy will not they feel themselves on that occasion who have been faithful to a holy vocation, who have avoided the dangers of the world, embraced the humiliations and austerities of penance, and taken the victorious cross of Jesus Christ as their inheritance. How great will be the joy of the religious soul when the concerts of Angels and the acclamations of the whole universe will have succeeded that austere silence to which she had condemned herself of her own accord! When those dark veils and habits of mourning, beneath which she was buried as it were, will be changed into robes of glory, whose brightness will outshine the stars of heaven! when the dark and narrow enclosure of the cloister will be replaced by the spacious courts and the ineffable splendour of the heavenly Jerusalem! when fasts, abstinences, and all the labours of a penitential life will be swallowed up in the ocean of eternal delight! Thus shall be completely fulfilled the promise of our Saviour: *Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or*

*father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting.**

Oh, you then, who have conceived the noble design of leaving all things for a God who is so magnificent in His rewards, begin your sacrifice, and receive the first pledge of those favours which are promised to you. Divest yourself of the livery of this world, and appear at the foot of the altar, clothed in a nuptial robe which will give you a title to the privileges of the holy spouses of the Lamb. May the Lord, at the same time, invisibly adorn your soul with the richest ornaments of His grace! And you, parents and friends of her who affords such an affecting spectacle upon this day, envy not her happiness; sadden not with your tears this ceremony which makes the heavenly spirits rejoice; or if tears must escape from natural tenderness, let them flow, at least, without bitterness. This is not a funeral pomp, but a new birth which we celebrate. No; parents of this Christian virgin!—you do not lose your daughter, because she becomes more specially the daughter and the servant of the Lord. No; pious relative, who has so long been a mother to her, and you, youthful brother, who show how worthy you are of bearing a part in this religious scene!—this is not a mournful duty which you render to her who is so dear to you, when you place upon her head the veil which makes her sacred to the Lord. Never have you shown your love more clearly than at the present moment; and never has she beheld a more glorious day than the present, when, surrounded by her whole family, and supported by them, she enters upon a most sacred and most glorious career.

My brethren, my dear sisters, and all you who hear me, it only remains for us all to unite our prayers, to bring down the most abundant blessings of heaven upon that happy victim whose immolation is now about to take place! Oh! may the Angel of the Lord conduct her to the altar! May the Queen of Angels receive her into the number of her most beloved daughters! May her name be written, even upon this day, in the book of life, to be never more effaced from it, and to obtain for her a crown of never-ending glory! *Amen.*

* *Matt.* xix. 29.

SERMON ON THE MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN JESUS CHRIST, CONSIDERED AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD, AND THE RELIGIOUS SOUL WHO CONSECRATES HERSELF TO HIM.

PREACHED AT A RELIGIOUS PROFESSION, IN THE CHAPEL OF THE BENEDICTINES OF THE TEMPLE, IN PARIS, ON THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER, THE 25TH OF APRIL, 1819.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me."—*John* x. 14.

All I behold in this sanctuary, my dear sisters, reminds me of the affecting picture which is presented to us in the Gospel of this day. For, is it not, indeed, a sheepfold beloved by the Lord, within which are assembled beneath His eyes those happy sheep which He has chosen Himself, and separated from the world, to be the special object of most tender solicitude? From this tabernacle, the Divine Shepherd watches over you both day and night, removes the dangers which threaten you, averts the assaults of your invisible enemies, sustains you in every conflict, rewards you for your sacrifices, and nourishes your souls with strength, consolation, light, and love. When prostrate in His presence, you render Him your perpetual adorations, methinks you ought to hear His voice inwardly saying to you, "Fear not, heaven-favoured flock, whose protector and guardian I am." *Nolite timere pusillus grex.** "I will not suffer those to perish whom My Father has confided to My care to conduct them to His kingdom." *Quia complacuit patri vestro dare vobis regnum.*† Indeed, my dear sisters, if there could be a certain pledge of predestination here below, it would be for the religious soul who, by renouncing all things, has taken the Lord as her sole inheritance. But whilst she does not receive that absolute assurance, with which no one upon this earth is favoured, that soul enjoys, at least, the most solid and most lawful motives of confidence which can possibly be afforded in the present life; and this is what I undertake to show, for your consolation, in the present discourse.

All sanctity and salvation are included in these two words of my text, *I know Mine, and Mine know Me;* and, therefore, to be known by Jesus Christ, and to know Him in turn, with a knowledge of love, is to be marked with the distinctive

* *Luke* xii. 32. † *Ibid.*

character of the true sheep, or elect. Now, I have no hesitation in asserting that the religious soul finds in her vocation, and in her fidelity in corresponding with that vocation, the most reasonable motives of hoping that she is known by the Saviour, and that she knows Him in the same excellent manner. For, on one side, the grace of a religious vocation is, as it were, a pledge to her that Jesus Christ knows her with that affectionate acquaintance, inasmuch as He has chosen her from amongst thousands of others to be His spouse; and, on the other side, her correspondence with that grace, and her free and voluntary consecration to a religious life, is, as it were, a pledge that she knows Jesus Christ by love, as she sacrifices all things, in order to be irrevocably attached to Him alone. From this we must conclude that the person who sincerely consecrates herself to God by the vows of religion, may, without pride or presumption, indulge in the pleasing hope that she belongs to that blessed flock which will be the eternal object of the love of the Good Shepherd. *Cognosco meas et cognoscunt me meæ.*

Could I treat any subject more interesting to you in particular, my dear sister, who are now on the eve of contracting those holy engagements, of which such precious confidence ought to be the fruit? The world which you are leaving holds out to its followers pleasures and present favours, but the enjoyment of them is transitory, and full of bitterness; and it offers no remedy against the terrors of that awful future which is fast approaching, and which every moment threatens to swallow them. That religion, on the contrary, which you embrace, imposes present privations and crosses which heavenly grace renders light and easy to be borne, but it opens, for the time to come, a prospect of joy and happiness without end, the very hope of which is already an anticipated beatitude. May this simple and familiar discourse which you are about to hear, make you still more conscious of the value of your vocation, and with the wisdom of that choice which you are about to make this day! Let us all unite in asking this grace through the intercession of the purest of virgins. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I. In the grace of a religious vocation, my dear sisters, I distinguish three virtues, which are all equally precious and excellent, and which I wish you should carefully consider;—a first grace by which the Son of God chooses and sets apart from all eternity the soul whom He destines as His spouse; a second grace, by which He manifests that selection, and calls upon the soul to correspond with it; and a third grace, by

which He conducts her through every obstacle, to the consummation of that holy vocation—that is to say, to the religious profession which is destined to unite her with Him for all eternity. Is not this a threefold and very consoling pledge of the affectionate intercourse which He entertains with that soul? *Cognosco meas.*

I say, in the first place, that He chooses her and sets her apart from all eternity; for you are well aware, my dear sisters, that your vocation does not come from yourselves, but from Him. It is not you who have chosen your God; but He has been pleased to make choice of you. *Non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos.** Now, as all the thoughts of God are from eternity, He therefore saw you long before you had begun to exist; before the formation of the universe, and the beginning of time, He separated you in His designs from the multitude of mankind; He prepared for you a habitation in the retirement of His tabernacle, and destined you for the glorious titles of virgins and spouses. Oh! how deeply should not this reflection affect your hearts! What one is there amongst you who would not exclaim with a feeling of humble gratitude: "Who am I, O Lord, that Thou shouldst have fixed Thy divine looks upon me whilst I had yet no being—that Thou shouldst have loved me with a love of predilection before I was conceived in my mother's womb? Alas! what hast Thou beheld in Thy future creature but weakness and, perhaps, unfaithfulness? and yet, Thou hast been occupied with me in Thy eternal counsels, not only to give me existence and life, or to bestow upon me the still more precious gift of the true faith, but to set me apart from the faithful themselves, and to associate me with the small number of privileged souls whom Thou art pleased to admit to the most intimate familiarity with Thyself, and upon whom Thou dost bestow Thy most signal favours. Ah! how shall I ever cease to think of Thee, or to love and bless Thee, as Thou hast never ceased to think of me even throughout eternity, and hast prepared for me such a signal favour, at a period so inconceivably remote." This is a language, my sisters, which the world is incapable of comprehending. As it is not conscious of the disorder in which it is plunged, or the precipices to the brink of which it runs, neither can it feel the happiness of those souls who have fled away from the contagion of its impiety and guilt—of those souls to whom pride, ambition, envy, and seductive pleasures are unknown—who enjoy the peace which virtue alone can give, and who find

* *John* xv. 16.

their sweetest consolation in meditating upon the law of the Lord, and in singing forth His praises.

But, to make you enjoy this happiness, it is not enough that God should have chosen you and set you apart from all eternity. It is also required that He should vouchsafe to manifest this choice to each of you, and to call you, as it were by name, to that holy state for which He destined you. Accordingly, we read in the Gospel that the Good Shepherd *calleth His own sheep by name*.* In what manner, in what place, and at what period of your life has He made you hear His voice, I know not. It is certain that you have heard it, as you have obeyed it. Perhaps He has spoken to you from your earliest years, by inspiring you, even at that early period, with a high-minded contempt for the vanities of this world; perhaps He has imparted a wisdom to your infancy which astonished the sages. How easy victory has been to you in such a case, and what thanksgivings do you not owe Him who has made Himself the master of your affections, from the very dawn of life, whilst yet you could not be conscious of any other chains except those of His love! Perhaps He has waited until that age when the pleasures and seductions of the world begin, in order that He may then overcome growing passions with the power of His grace, and derive the greater glory from triumphing over a heart which the inclinations of nature had already contested with Him. If such be the case, from how great a danger have you not escaped? Well may you exclaim: "My soul, like the sparrow of which the prophet speaks,† had been almost entangled in the net of the fowler; but the Lord has come to my aid; He has broken the snare; and now, when delivered from the ties which bound me, I have taken my flight in freedom." Perhaps He has drawn you towards Him at a still more recent period, and gone in quest of you in your wanderings, to bring you back to His fold. In any case, with what gratitude should not each of you remember the happy moment when those sweet and victorious words have been addressed to your heart: "Hearken, O my daughter, to the voice of thy Lord and thy God, and attentively consider His designs in thy regard. *Audi filia et vide.*‡ Thou hast long been the object of My love and My selection; and I now require that thou shouldst love Me and make me the object of thy choice in return. If thou wilt renounce the alliance of a mortal spouse, I will be thy spouse Myself. If thou wilt leave the house of thy father, My sanctuary will be thy refuge. If thou

* *John* x. 3. † *Ps.* cxxiii. 7. ‡ *Ibid.* xliv. 11.

wilt come forth from an unfaithful people, from this world which has made for itself strange gods, I will associate thee with a holy nation whose Head and whose King I am, and who know no other laws but Mine. *Obliviscere populum tuum et domum patris tui et concupiscet rex decorem tuum.*"*

What a light has been shed on your intellect, and what feeling has filled your heart, at these words? Wounded as with a burning dart of Divine love, you beheld nothing in this world except the heavenly spouse who spoke to you. Everything else has become valueless in your eyes—possessions, liberty, the joys and honours of the world, human friendships, the ties of blood and nature. You have felt a holy impatience to sacrifice all things, in order to possess this only object of all your affections. Your thoughts, your desires, your projects, have undergone a total change; and from that moment forward you become new creatures. The Divine Shepherd no longer calls you by the name which you received from your fathers, but by the new name which He gives His chaste spouses, which is only known by Himself and them, and to which such wonderful privileges are attached, that upon the day which shall crown the triumph of the elect it will be marked in shining and indelible characters upon their foreheads. Happy, a thousand times happy, will she then be who shall have abandoned a name which is great and illustrious amongst men—a name borne by heroes whose exploits fill our histories, to obtain that new name; for all those names which are so glorious and celebrated here below, despite the vain immortality which is attributed to them, will perish at last with all the fame, and all the recollection of human things, and will never more be known in the ages of eternity, whilst the new name,† given by Jesus Christ, and typified by that which you are about to receive, my dear sister, upon this day of your profession, will be a title of never-ending glory in the eyes of Angels and men, and even of God Himself. Upon that day, my dear sisters, worldlings themselves will be sensible of the grace of vocation which they now despise; and the honour of a sacred alliance by which we shall be united to the Saviour Himself, will be far more highly prized than the honour of an august birth, which should have given us monarchs as our ancestors. Cherish, then, more and more, that precious favour which your heavenly spouse has conferred. Often say, with the Queen of Virgins, although, like her, you may have descended from a royal line—"The Almighty hath done great things in my regard." *Fecit mihi*

* *Psalm* xliv. † *Apoc.* xi. 17.

*magna qui potens est.** "From the throne of His eternity He hath vouchsafed to look down upon His humble servant." *Respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ.*† "He has humbled Himself to me, in order to elevate me to Him, to invite me to a happiness which is no other than His own, and to a glory which will last as long as the ages of eternity." *Ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*‡

Has He been contented with merely calling you, my dear sisters? Has He not, as it were, taken you by the hand to conduct you from the house of bondage to that land of promise in which you dwell? Has He not gone before you, to level the way, to remove every obstacle, and to overturn every barrier that could impede your progress? It is thus the Gospel of this day represents the Good Shepherd leading out His sheep and going before them. *Et educit eas et ante eas vadit.*§

Let each of you, my dear sisters, enter deeply into your own hearts, and examine the history of your hearts, and of your lives, since the day when the grace of a holy vocation has, as it were, sprung up within them. Is it not the secret presence of this Divine Pastor which has sustained your weakness, and calmed your agitation and alarm; which has aided you in overcoming the disgust, the fatigues, the repugnances of nature; which has frequently revived your weakness and restored your faltering resolutions to their primitive strength? Has it not sometimes been necessary that He should take you in His arms when, weak and dejected, you were about to yield to faint-heartedness and fatigue? But I do not wish that your ardour should ever be disparaged. Could you have triumphed over external opposition without His help? Who has put to flight so many difficulties which were insurmountable in appearance? Who has dispelled the prejudices of those worldly relatives and friends? Who has strengthened this feeble health? Who has unravelled these inextricable embarrassments of temporal concerns? Who has severed those ties—those engagements which seemed as if they would hold you captive for ever? In fine, who else besides the solemn ruler and disposer of all events, has given rise to these unexpected incidents, these extraordinary circumstances to which you are indebted for the fulfilment of all your wishes? Review all this detail within your minds; and at every step you will not fail to recognize the attention and love of this tender and vigilant Shepherd who never for a moment withholds His care from His sheep.

* *Luke* i. 49.
† *Ibid.* 48.
‡ *Ibid.*
§ *John* x. 3, 4.

But why should I speak of particular obstacles when the public obstacles have been so great that the very existence of this holy association was the effect of nothing but a series of prodigies? Do you not sometimes, my sisters, reflect upon the period at which we have arrived, in the midst of what a generation you live, in what a Babylon you sing so peaceably the hymns of Sion? Who could have believed that such a blessing was possible twenty years since, when France was without an altar, without priests, almost without God—when Christian virgins, driven from their retreats, were fugitives and wanderers in the midst of a hostile world—when the eternal abolition of the sacred vows of religion was so solemnly proclaimed? But of what avail are all the efforts of men, and the most awful revolutions to overturn the councils of the Almighty? who could tear from the hands of the Good Shepherd the sheep which His Father has confided to Him? You belonged to Him even then; though dispersed and unknown by each other, you were known by Him; in His eyes you already formed a flock which He would one day gather together in this sheepfold. His designs must be accomplished. Where is she who shall serve as the instrument to execute them? Alas! exiled from a land where her fathers reigned, she wanders from one country to another, overwhelmed with sorrow, and daily exposed to a thousand dangers. But He never leaves her; and wherever she is, He covers her with His protecting hand. He is with her in the courts of foreign kings; in camps, amid the crash of arms; He conducts her, to use the language of Scripture, through the water and the flames, through the tempests and the abyss; and when the time marked out in His decrees shall have arrived, He brings her back to the place of her birth, establishes her in the habitation which He had prepared for her, and surrounds her with a holy family to whom she becomes a mother. Impiety and discord murmur around this habitation, but peace and innocence, and the union of hearts bear sway within; the happy flock will be multiplied day after day, and in all this we must acknowledge and adore the work of the right hand of the Most High.

My sisters, has not the Author of so many miracles proved clearly enough that He knows you, and that He loves you? *Cognosco meas.* But to crown His favours, has He not confined Himself with you here? Does He not remain here day and night upon this altar, to receive your homage, and to listen to your requests? If what we too often see elsewhere has sometimes made us think that hell has been removed to this earth, does it not seem that heaven had come down in the

midst of you? Does not your title of PERPETUAL ADORERS make you bear a certain resemblance to the Angels, whose glory and privilege it is to minister always before the throne of God? As they are always prostrate before the throne of God's majesty, are you not also without interruption before the throne of His mercy? Ah, make yourselves always worthy of such an honourable distinction, which astonishes the heavenly spirits. And you, my dear sister, come with joy to take up your abode in this happy land of Gessen, which is alone exempt from the plagues which have struck the rest of the land of Egypt, and the thick darkness which covers it. You will always dwell there beneath the eyes of the Divine Shepherd. He leads His sheep to the ever-abundant pastures which are found there, and makes them drink of the waters that spring up into eternal life. He will give you fresh proofs of that love which has set you apart before all time, which has afterwards called you, as if by name, to the possession of His inheritance, and which finally establishes you in that inheritance to-day. Continue to live in that pleasing confidence with which so many favours ought to inspire you; and let your gratitude be proportioned, as much as possible, to the greatness of the benefit.

But, my sisters, if the grace of a holy vocation is a sort of security to the religious soul that Jesus Christ knows her with a knowledge of love (*Cognosco meas*) the correspondence of the religious soul with that grace, and her voluntary consecration to an austere and penitential life, is a security to her that she mutually knows Jesus Christ. *Cognoscunt me meæ.*

II. The Gospel of this day, my dear sisters, contains one remarkable expression which possesses a peculiar interest for you. It is the expression of our Divine Saviour, *I know Mine, and Mine know Me: as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father*, by which He compares the knowledge which His sheep have of Him to the knowledge which He possesses of His Eternal Father. Who, then, are the sheep which know the Father in such an excellent manner—as He Himself knows His Father? They are the souls which embrace a perfect life, and who bind themselves by the vows of religion to observe the evangelical counsels. And why? Jesus Christ has shown that He knew His Father, because He has performed His will in every respect, even to the extent of divesting Himself of all things, of sacrificing and annihilating Himself in order to please Him; and the religious soul proves, in like manner, that she knows Jesus Christ, because she is obedient to His voice, and faithful to His examples in every respect,

even to the extent of divesting herself, by the vow of poverty, of all she possesses, of sacrificing herself as a living victim by the vow of chastity, of annihilating herself by the vow of obedience. We shall explain these three points at further length.

Jesus Christ knew His Father; and because His Father wished that He should divest Himself of all the riches of His glory, and appear in the condition of a poor and abject man, He co-operates in this design; He leaves his everlasting mansions, He consents to be born in a stable, to live in indigence, and to die in the absolute want of all things. The religious soul knows Jesus Christ; she sees Him in this condition, and she hears Him calling her to follow Him; she cannot resist the voice of the Good Shepherd; and without listening to the repugnances of nature, she says to Him, at once, as He Himself had said to His Father, *Behold, I come to do Thy will, O God.** She sees Him in a state of poverty; and because she recognizes Him as her model, she wishes, at any sacrifice, to be poor like Him. Although He was the heir of all things, and the Sovereign Master of the universe, He possessed nothing, and He had not even where to lay His head. In order to imitate Him as much as possible, she renounces the goods which she had inherited from her fathers; she deprives herself of all right to dispose of them, or to enjoy them; and she becomes a stranger to all that most lawfully belonged to her. *Cognoscunt me meæ.* He has laid aside every mark of His sovereign greatness, and concealed Himself not only beneath the veils of His humanity, but under a raiment that is coarse and despicable even in the eyes of men; and this is sufficient to make her anxious to lay aside the titles which distinguish her, and the very name she has received at her birth; to make her reject the pomp of worldly attire, and clothe herself beneath a dark veil with the very sack-cloth and hair-cloth. *Cognoscunt me meæ.* He tells her that He will be the treasure of those who are poor of their own accord; and as she knows Him to be the only Sovereign Good, she values this treasure more than all the riches of the earth; she regards every gain which would deprive her of it as a loss, and all the gold and silver which she must sacrifice, in order to acquire it, as a mere morsel of filth. *Cognoscunt me meæ.* He promises a hundred-fold in this life, and eternal happiness in the next, to those who shall have left all things to follow Him; and as she knows Him to be truth itself, she relies upon His promise; she

* *Hebr.* x. 7.

regards evangelical poverty not as a sacrifice, but as a heavenly gain; she feels that she puts to interest all that she abandons, and that she sows, in a fertile land, all that the world imagines her to throw away; accordingly she sows with joy, and she is certain of reaping with transports of infinite gladness. *Cognoscunt me meæ.* The avarice and selfishness of so many Christians in this world arises from their not knowing Jesus Christ. They fix all their thoughts upon their houses, their fields, their revenues, their husbandry; and a breath often overturns all their hopes, by scattering the frail goods on which they build them, like dust before the wind; whilst the religious soul, resting all her hopes upon the words of Jesus Christ, who was poor Himself, secures her fortune from every reverse by the very act with which she deprives herself of it; and, according to the energetic expression of St. Paul, lays up for herself a good foundation for an endless future.* It is thus she proves by her vow of poverty that she knows her Divine Master. *Cognoscunt me meæ.*

The Son of God, not content with divesting Himself of all things, moreover, sacrificed Himself to do the will of His Father. *Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast fitted to me; then said I, behold I come.*† As if He had said—"In order that I may be an agreeable victim in Thy eyes, that I may satisfy Thy justice." He actually sacrifices His innocent flesh, and after having lived in privation and labours He expires in torments upon a cross. The religious soul contemplates her expiring Saviour; she knows that He requires a like sacrifice from her, and she offers that sacrifice by the vow of chastity: for perfect chastity, of which the world is far from having a just idea, is a true holocaust of the whole man, by which the body is immolated as a *living sacrifice*,‡ and the heart as a *spiritual sacrifice*.§

The body is sacrificed not only by the privation of all the pleasures of the senses, but also by the severe constraint which is imposed on the whole exterior man by that habitual and universal mortification which is the crucifixion of the flesh, and the death of the senses. A virgin who is consecrated to Jesus Christ has eyes which are not to see created objects, ears which are not to hear the words of men, a tongue which is to speak to God alone, or of Him alone, and the members of the body which must be sacrificed to penance, so that she may say in the words of the Apostle—*With Christ I am nailed to the*

* 1 *Tim.* vi. 19. † *Heb.* x. 5, 7. ‡ *Rom.* xii. 1. § 1 *Peter* ii. 5.

*cross.** She lives only to die every moment; she is a living sacrifice. And why should she submit to this voluntary martyrdom, except that she knows and loves Him alone who has delivered up His pure and virginal flesh for her sake? *Cognoscunt me meæ.*

However, the holocaust is not yet complete. Chastity has immolated only a part of the man; and that is the less noble portion of his being—his senses and his members. She must also sacrifice the spiritual victim, which is her heart, and make that also die. The heart lives upon affection and love. Natural attachment towards relatives, friends, and others, whose society is pleasing, seem to be as necessary to it as existence itself. Oh! how much it must cost the feeling heart to sever ties which are so pleasing and so legitimate! To a certain extent, it tears it asunder. But she who aspires to be the spouse of Jesus Christ is aware of the jealousy of the Divine Lover of our souls; she knows that every affection, of which He is not the object, offends Him, and that she is not worthy of Him if she loves anyone else but Himself, unless she loves it for His sake. *Cognoscunt me meæ.* The most legitimate attachments, the most innocent inclinations and desires, are accordingly subdued, resisted, and sacrificed. This is the complete death of the victim, and the consummation of the holocaust. But, oh, Jesus! what idea can we give of the reward which Thou dost reserve for this generous immolation of one's self? Thy servant no longer lives the life of nature, but she begins to live the life which is hidden with Thee in God. She becomes detached from creatures, but she finds all her affections sanctified, and rendered, in some measure, Divine by Thy love. She may experience coldness, perhaps, from those to whom she had been dear; but she will be overwhelmed with Thy graces and Thy Divine favours; and if she reckons fewer friends amongst men, she will have Him whom the Angels adore as her protector and Spouse. How glorious will she not be upon the solemn day of the nuptials of the Lamb when she will be clothed in the wedding-garment, and crowned before the face of heaven and earth, in virtue of her dignity of queen and spouse—when that body which she treats with so much rigour at present, will arise glorious and immortal, resplendent with such lustre and beauty as will outshine the brightness of the stars—when that heart which is now condemned to so many privations, will superabound with heavenly joy, and be unable to contain

* *Galat.* ii. 19.

the torrent of ineffable delights with which it will be inundated—when this virgin who is lonely and forgotten by the world upon this day, will then be introduced with honour into the court of the King of kings, and called to join in the train of the Lamb for all eternity—when she shall, at length, enjoy the consolation of beholding that many of those whose friendship it was painful to sacrifice, are indebted for their salvation and happiness to the prayers which an affectionate and ardent charity never ceased to inspire her with for their sakes! How she will then applaud herself for having known her crucified God, and for having consented to sacrifice herself as He had done before her! *Cognoscunt me meæ.*

But she goes still farther. Although the vows of poverty and chastity have divested her of all things, and immolated her, they have not annihilated her. After having renounced the goods of this earth, and all the enjoyments of the senses, and all natural attachments, she still preserves a free will, and some control over herself. But the vow of obedience which finally annihilates her, deprives her of all this. For, is it not a real annihilation when a reasonable creature can think of nothing, or desire nothing, or take no step, or form no project, without the direction or permission of another! What remains for her whose very will and judgment no longer belong to her, and who has subjugated the noblest faculties of her mind and heart! Accordingly, the great Apostle, when alluding to the obedience of Jesus Christ, terms it an annihilation. *He hath emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. Semetipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens.** This absolute dependence accomplishes the total destruction of the old man, because it overturns self-love and pride to its very foundation. Therefore it is, that haughty impiety has always regarded the vows of religion as something peculiarly odious and revolting. But what impiety hates is precisely what charms the humble virgin, who is enlightened by faith. She knows the Master whom she has chosen. *Cognoscunt me meæ.* She has learned that by making herself a voluntary slave she becomes free—that by annihilating herself for Him and with Him, she acquires a new being. What benefits does she not find in that happy annihilation to which she has reduced herself? Released from the tyranny of the passions, from the caprices of self-will, from the eccentricities of humour, from this multitude of turbulent, restless, and often conflicting desires which agitate the human heart, and toss it to every side like the waves of a stormy sea, she reposes

* *Philipp.* ii. 7.

upon the bosom of obedience; she is a stranger to trouble, perplexity, uncertainty, and remorse. It is not herself that forms her determinations; it is not herself that directs her courses; she is guided by the Shepherd: all the solicitude is for Him, and all the security for her; He speaks to her through her rule and her superiors, whom He uses as the organ of Himself; her only care is to hear His voice, and to do whatever He commands; and she cannot go astray while she follows them. The Gospel says that the sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, and that they follow Him because they know His voice. *Vocem ejus audiunt, et illum sequuntur, quia sciunt vocem ejus.** Whilst others, conceited by their imaginary wisdom, and following the inclinations of their own will, as their only guide, grope in the dark, and fall into the abyss, she advances in a course which is always bright and certain; she advances through it with ineffable consolation, and she feels her hope and joy increase as she approaches its termination. If she perseveres to the end, she can say with St. Paul, in her dying hour—"I have finished my course; I have preserved the faith which I swore to my Spouse; as to the rest, there is preserved for me a crown of justice."†

Oh! my dear sister, who art now about to enter upon this career of sacrifice and glory, never forget these momentous words: "If she perseveres." If you persevere to the end in the sentiments which animate you to-day—in a love for your vows and fidelity in the observance of them—in the spirit of poverty, sacrifice, and obedience—in this state of death which will be typified by your burial beneath a funeral pall—in union with the cross which the minister of Jesus Christ will give you for your inheritance—if you persevere; this is the indispensable condition. The crown to which you aspire is promised to perseverance alone; for, alas! there are foolish virgins who imagine that they are known by the Spouse; and He will say to them upon a future day, *I know you not*;‡ who flatter themselves also that they know Him, and who wander far from Him because their lamps are extinguished in their hands, and the oil of charity is wanting to their hearts.

That such an awful calamity may not befall any one of you, my dear sisters, cease not to contemplate Him upon this altar whom it is so necessary that you should know full well; and imitate that object of your homage and adoration. Consider what a mastery His love has invented to perpetuate His humiliation and sacrifice, even to the end of time. What a state of

* *John* x. 3, 4. † 2 *Tim.* iv. 8. ‡ *Matt.* xxv. 12.

bereavement He sustains in the blessed Eucharist. What obscurity beneath its veils. What a state of immolation and death. What obedience to the voice of His priests. What an abandonment of Himself into their hands. What silence. What annihilation. Act in accordance with this model; and if you really know Jesus Christ, you cannot complain of this annihilation to which He subjects you for a few years, perhaps only for a few days, when your God is subject to it throughout the whole course of ages.

Do you require other models after this? Alas! what associations does not this very spot recall! And how easy I attempt to touch a wound which is so deep—a wound which is still so acutely felt—the incurable wound which has pierced the hearts of our people! Is not this the very spot which has witnessed the plunder, the immolation, the destruction of regal majesty, and that long series of mournful scenes, which have terminated in the death of a martyred king, of a magnanimous queen, and of a princess who, even while on earth, may be numbered amongst the Angels; of a youthful heir to the throne, who knew no life but bitterness and sorrow! Alas! we should add to these all the members of that august family, if heaven had not miraculously preserved a beloved daughter to assuage our sorrow and to support the hopes which were associated with her name and virtues! Has not this very pavement on which we tread, been bathed with the tears of those illustrious victims! Oh! my dear sisters, how little must you regard your austerities when you reflect upon their sufferings? What is your religious poverty when compared with the privations which they have experienced; your humiliations when compared with the outrages by which they were deluged; your voluntary captivity when compared with the odious and violent captivity in which they were forced to groan? And if we must confess that your penitential state is a state of habitual death, how great a difference is there between this death and the death which they were compelled to endure.

But, O Lord, another thought strikes me at this moment. Here I recognise a magnificent design of Thy wisdom, a most signal pledge of Thy mercy towards us. How is this place which had been polluted by such detestable outrages, now changed into a religious sanctuary! How has Thy throne of grace been raised on the very theatre where such sacrilegious violences have been enacted? How could the prison of royal victims have become the peaceful retreat of those virgins who have made themselves captives to Thy love, who, always prostrate at Thy feet, divide their lives between prayer and

penance? Oh, Divine Saviour, the prayer of a martyred king has been heard; he has implored forgiveness for his people; and, at his prayer, the very spot from which an accusing voice ascended against us, has been converted into a place of expiation; Thou Thyself hast descended there to interpose between us and Thy enraged Father, to turn away His looks from our crimes, and to make them rest upon the face of His Christ. Thou willest that Thy servants should sacrifice themselves along with Thee, and unite their perpetual supplications with Thine; and, to render their prayers more efficacious, to make their intercession more powerful, Thou willest that they should have at their head a Virgin descended from that blood which had been so sacrilegiously shed. Doubt not, my sisters, that this is more than an ordinary disposition of Providence. You have received a true mission from on high to assuage the rigour of Divine justice, and to prevent the calamities which threaten you. Upon your fidelity and fervour depends the public weal, as the victory of Israel depended upon the prayer of Moses on the mountain. Never abate your efforts. Heaven and earth require it. Fulfil your glorious destiny. You will save your country; you will console the Church; and upon that great day, when the Good Shepherd will make a final separation between the sheep and the goats, being recognised and acknowledged by Him, you will be placed at His right hand in company with that happy flock which He shall lead to the pastures of eternal bliss. *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE SPIRITUAL BIRTH OF A RELIGIOUS SOUL ON THE DAY ON WHICH SHE CONTRACTS HER FINAL OBLIGATIONS.

PREACHED AT A RELIGIOUS PROFESSION, ON THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

"After her shall virgins be brought to the king."—*Psalm* xliv. 15.

THERE is not upon this earth a more illustrious title than that of a Christian virgin. It is not one of those high sounding titles to which perishable distinctions are attached, and which attract the homage of a frivolous world, but it is a title beloved by God and revered by His Angels—a title which confers a right to immortal honours and glorious privileges in the kingdom of heaven. It is the only title which we bestow on

the holiest of all creatures—the Mother of the Word made flesh; and it is the title which becomes her best of any. When we style her VIRGIN by excellence, we feel that we not only point her out with sufficient distinctness, but that we also include all her praises in that single name. It is she, indeed, that guides this innocent crowd of virgins. *Adducentur virgines post eam.* It is she presents them to her Son as her followers, her adopted imitators, and her children. *Proximæ ejus afferentur tibi.* It is she introduces them into the abode of pure felicity and never ending joy. *Afferentur in lætitia et exultatione.* And she opens to them, in the most inaccessible summits of the heavenly Jerusalem, the secret sanctuary of the Divinity into which they alone, out of all the elect, are admitted—where the King of Glory manifests to His spouses all the splendour of His beauty. *Adducentur in templum regis.*

How highly, then, should not you prize your happiness, my dear sister, in Jesus Christ, who, after having released yourself from those trammels in which the world endeavoured to hold you captive—after having prepared yourself for this great day by two full years of probation and retreat—are now at length to be solemnly received into that glorious society of which Mary is the head to govern, and the guide to direct—into this blessed family, of which she is the mother which must be united with her in forming the train of the Lamb without stain in the kingdom of God for all eternity. *Sequuntur agnum quocunque ierit.** What must add still more to your joy is, that you enter into a congregation peculiarly devoted to the Queen of Virgins—a congregation which is honoured by bearing her name, and which has received innumerable precious marks of her protection ever since its institution. There is another circumstance which ought also to affect you, and which strikes me as a coincidence which is favourable to this ceremony and to all its consequences. It is that you give yourself to religion upon the very day on which this holy patroness has been given to the world; and that you are born to this new life in the midst of those hymns of joy which greeted Mary at her birth. I shall take occasion from this circumstance to consider her actual birth, which the Church celebrates to-day, as the model of your spiritual birth which we are about to celebrate at the same time. I shall consider three principal qualities in the birth of Mary—her supernatural birth, her humble and obscure birth, and her birth to a holy and perfect life; and from these three qualities I shall point

* *Apoc.* xiv. 4.

out those which ought to characterize the spiritual birth of a soul who consecrates herself to God in the religious state. And may she, my dear sister, whom you choose as your mother, and who is about to be proposed as a model for your imitation, place upon my lips such living and efficacious words as may bear strength and light to your inmost soul! *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—The birth of Mary was supernatural. Her parents, St. Joachim and St. Anne, had arrived at that age when nature refuses to bless parents with an offspring. Anne had been barren all her life, and could not become a mother except by a miracle. But it was required that this precious branch, which had been promised for so many ages, should come forth from the root of Jesse. The oracles of the prophets could not remain unfulfilled. No obstacle could prevent the designs of almighty wisdom. The laws of nature are suspended; old age and sterility become fruitful; and Anne gives birth to her who is, one day, to bring forth a Saviour. It may be said, therefore, that Mary is not born of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—that she is the offspring of a miracle and the fruit of the Divine promises—in a word, that grace is the only agent in her conception and birth.

It is also the grace of Heaven that alone brings forth souls to a religious life. Your vocation to such a sublime state, my sister, is a favour which you can never sufficiently appreciate—a favour in return for which you shall never be able to manifest sufficient gratitude to Heaven. It was necessary that God should make choice of you from all eternity—that He should distinguish you, as it were, by a peculiar character—that He should interiorly separate you from the children of this world by thoughts, desires, and inclinations contrary to those which nature inspires. It was necessary that a victorious grace should enable you to triumph over the feelings of flesh and blood, and fortify you against the seductions of the world, and dispose your heart for every sacrifice; for I venture to assert that it is neither repose nor exemption from those cares and solicitudes which are inseparable from an establishment in the world, nor the pleasures of a certain and select society, nor any other earthly advantage that you have come to seek in this sacred solitude. You have come to it in a true spirit of self-immolation, to die to yourself and to all things else, to offer yourself in sacrifice to the Lord as a victim of penance and Divine love. Now, is not a vocation of this kind evidently a supernatural vocation?

If Jesus Christ, speaking of the regeneration which is neces-

sary for simple Christians to make, styles it a new birth, and declares that unless a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God—if He attributes that miracle to the Omnipotent Spirit who breathes where He will—with how much more reason should not we attribute to the same Spirit that second spiritual birth, which is still more wonderful, by which a Christian abandons the ways in which the ordinary faithful tread, elevates herself to a loftier degree of perfection, tramples every propensity of nature under foot, and embraces a life which is more worthy of Angels than proportioned to human weakness! How great a change must not the hand of the God of the universe have wrought in a soul, to lead her to such generous resolutions?

Alas! my sisters, if, which God forbid! there were even one amongst you who had not experienced this happy change—if any one amongst you who had entered this haven of religion, wafted by any other breath save that of the Holy Spirit, without having been transformed by an omnipotent and invisible hand into a new creature, how bitterly should not such an one deplore her imprudence and misfortune! How pitiful would be the condition of a person under the yoke of the evangelical counsels, bound by the most sacred ties, and still filled with profane sentiments—a prisoner in the cloister, chained against her will to the altar of the God of Hosts—and altogether engrossed by the recollection of the flesh pots of Egypt, in that very desert where the manna falls down from heaven? Ah! what else could she be but a miserable dupe who could expect no further consolation—a melancholy slave condemned to incessant murmurs—a foolish virgin who could not be admitted to the festival of the Spouse—a daughter of Babylon, who would strive in vain to be identified with the holy women of Jerusalem?

It is not, therefore, the veil which covers you, nor the walls and barriers which surround you, nor any other outward mark that constitutes the true religious and the spouse of Jesus Christ, but a divine vocation; it is the mysterious voice which speaks in the bottom of your heart, and which says to every one amongst you. "Hear, O my daughter, and learn the designs of thy God in thy regard." *Audi filia et vide.** "Hesitate not to separate thyself from this people, in the midst of whom thou hast been born and hast grown up; forget even the house of thy fathers; sever the most agreeable ties of blood and kindred. *Obliviscere populum tuum et domum patris*

* *Ps.* xliv. 11.

*tui.** And when thy heart has been disengaged from every earthly affection, the King of heaven Himself will be delighted with thy beauty. He who is styled the Sovereign Lord of the universe—He whom Angels and men adore, will become thy Spouse. Thou shalt be received into His house and admitted to a most intimate familiarity with Him; and thus shalt thou contract an everlasting union with Him." *Et concupiscet rex decorem tuum: ipse est Dominus Deus tuus, et adorabunt eum.*† It is the victorious energy of these words that has conducted you into this place. The Lord has really spoken to you; because He has loved you among all the daughters of Adam, with a love of predilection and has special designs of mercy in your regard. How many miracles has He not wrought to manifest His tenderness towards you? Oh! my sisters, let each one of you, at least in the bottom of your hearts, now glorify the truth. Is there any one amongst you whom He has not sought, even amidst the wayward paths of the world, and brought you back from them? Is there one of you to whom He may not address those words of His prophet: "My hands have brought thee from the ends of the earth. I have led thee away as if by force, and from afar off, and in the excess of My goodness I have said, Thou shalt be My handmaid, and thou shalt dwell in the inmost recesses of My tabernacle; and instead of rejecting thee as thou hast merited, I have preferred thee to a thousand others who have perished in the midst of the precipices to which thou wert hastening?" *Apprehendi te ab extremis terræ et a longinquis ejus vocavi te.*‡ But even though such may not have been the case, how many obstacles has Providence been obliged either to remove or to overturn—whether these obstacles may have been internal or external—in order to obtain admission for you into this sacred asylum? Perhaps it has broken the ties which had already been almost formed—ties which were no doubt lawful, but which would have bound you to the world for ever. Perhaps it has deprived you from your earliest years of the object of your most ardent affections—a beloved mother, perhaps, from whose arms you would not have had sufficient fortitude to tear yourself away. Perhaps, in order the more effectually to make you see the folly of all that this world admires, it has exhibited to your view—it may be within the bosom of your own family—the spectacle of grace, and youth, and beauty, falling cold and stiff in a moment, and like a flower which falls without having withered or decayed, sinking into the grave, in the midst of all their

* *Ps.* xliv. 11. † *Ibid.* 12. ‡ *Isaias* xli. 9.

loveliness. But how could we enumerate all the contrivances which the Lord has set in motion, all the means which He has employed, all the blows which He has struck with merciful rigour, to subdue your hearts, and to make them submissive to His love! Above all, how can we tell by what Divine charm He has led you captive, since you have ranked yourself beneath His laws, or what abundance of grace He pours upon your souls to sweeten the bitterness of your sacrifices, and to lighten the cross which you carry for His sake! O! if any one of these worthy spouses, of these faithful servants of so good a Master, could raise her voice in this assembly, what could she not relate! with what overflowing gratitude would she not speak to us of these mysterious delights, of these ineffable consolations, by which He makes those virgins, who have renounced all things to follow Him, so fervently attached to His service! Such are the fruits of a truly supernatural vocation; and a blind and carnal world can neither believe nor comprehend them. For, what conceptions has its short-sighted wisdom formed of your holy and happy state! It speaks of nothing else but slavery and imprisonment, of mourning veils, of unhappy victims, immured in those sepulchres which have been dug by the hands of religion. Have we forgotten how such alarming expressions were everywhere heard, how such detestable phrases were heard from the lips of all, twenty five years since, when the arrogant philosophy of the world prepared with so much bustle to regenerate the world? But what a glorious contradiction have you given them, my sisters—I allude to such among you as have passed through these storms—when you replied to your pretended liberators, that you chose to be captives in the house of the Lord, rather than to be free beneath the tents of sinners—when tyranny was compelled to put forth its whole strength to tear you away from these retreats out of which it was said you were so impatient to escape—when, after having been restored, against your will, to the society of your friends and relatives, you never ceased to regret the shade and the silence of the cloister, the peace of the sanctuary, and the sacred rigours of voluntary penance—when exiled and strangers in the midst of the world, you only sighed and groaned there, like the children of captivity of old, upon the banks of the rivers of Babylon! What a new contradiction have you not afterwards given it when, even at the very first moment that the fury of persecution had abated, and whilst infidelity still bore sway, you provided this new asylum, in which your scattered forces were again united, when, after great efforts, you raised again, with your own hands, the

barriers which had been placed between you and the world; submitting with joy to that yoke which violence had broken, you resumed the interrupted hymn of Sion with pleasing consolation; and living in peace within the shadow of the sanctuary, and crowding around the altar of the Lamb, you give us reason to say that if the second temple is far from equalling the first in magnificence, the same God always dwells in it, and the same mortal Angels make their concerts heard there. And you, too, my sister, also contribute in your turn to contradict and confound this proud and senseless philosophy, when, despising its ridicule and the maxims which it inculcates, you so freely renounce all that it boasts of and so ardently embrace all that it despises, readily exchanging an earthly inheritance for invisible goods, and all the pleasures of time for the hopes of eternity. This is the wisdom of the Gospel which is mere folly in the eyes of the world. It is the miracle of a religious vocation which imparts to your spiritual birth the first character of conformity with the birth of Mary. Both the one and the other are supernatural, as you now perceive. To this I add, that both one and the other are also humble and obscure in the eyes of man, but that they are glorious in the sight of God.

II.—Oh, profound wisdom of the designs of God! Mary is the most perfect of creatures. She comes forth from the hands of her Author, so beautiful and so resplendent with glory that the Angels, dazzled at the sight of her, ask with astonishment, "Who is she that cometh like a brilliant morning, who sends forth a light more pure and beautiful than the moon, and will soon outshine the sun itself?" *Quasi aurora consurgens; pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol.** It is the future Queen of Heaven who is born upon earth. But, what splendour surrounds her cradle! With what majesty does He adorn her in the eyes of men! This daughter of benediction, who has not shared in the corruption of sin, who bears upon her soul the living impress of the Divine likeness, who is destined to repair all the calamities which the first Eve had inflicted upon mankind, who will crush the head of the serpent, and be the Mother of God, had nothing to distinguish her outwardly from an ordinary child. That birth which constitutes the joy and admiration of the whole hierarchy of heaven, is an obscure and unknown event upon the earth, and merely attracts the attention of a few relatives and friends, who are very far from suspecting what a treasure has been bestowed upon the world. Ah!

* *Cant.* vi. 9.

Mary is that daughter of the great King; and all her glory is concealed within. *Omnis gloria ejus filiæ regis ab intus.** Humility must be the characteristic of her birth, because it is the characteristic of her whole life. She will always appear in poverty and abjection, and bear a larger share than any other creature in the insults and ignominy of her Son. This will be her most remarkable privilege—a privilege which she shall ever most jealously maintain.

I need not inform you, my sister, that she must be your model in this particular beyond all others. To be born to a religious life is to die to all human vanities, to devote one's self for ever to the most sincere and profound humility. Accordingly, the first step which is taken by a soul who has been called to this holy life, is to conceal and bury herself, to divest herself of worldly ornaments and dress, to clothe herself with dark veils, and to bury herself in the obscurity of the cloister, to be forgotten there by all mankind—I say to be buried; is there a more expressive phrase? Shall we not see you in a few moments, prostrate upon the ground, covered with a funeral pall, and, as it were, laid on the funeral bier, while we around you celebrate the anticipated ceremony of your funeral? What is the meaning of this melancholy rite, my sister? Is it a sad amusement - a vain representation, like that of the theatre? or is it not rather a striking lesson and the living image of what ought to happen within your soul? When the Church thus invests you, with the robes of death, has she not the intention of telling you by an emblem more expressive than any words, that you are dead, and that henceforth your lives are hidden with Jesus Christ in God? You ought to be as blind as the dead to all the pomps of the world, to all this frivolous splendour which fascinates the children of this world—as deaf as the dead to all the applause and commendation, to all the censure and ridicule of this world—as indifferent to indignity or contempt, to honours or insults as those who are already sleeping in the dust, whose senseless ashes we tread upon. You are dead, and you have no other life to enjoy but that which is hidden with Jesus Christ in God. Beware, my sister, and carefully reflect upon each of these words—a life hidden in God—hidden in the bosom of Him who dwells unseen—of Him whom all our senses cannot discover—who, though present everywhere—though the universe is entirely dependent upon Him, nevertheless appears visible in no place whatsoever. But this is not enough; your

* *Ps.* xliv. 14.

life is hidden with Jesus Christ. Oh, mystery! Do we comprehend these words? Where does Jesus Christ lead a hidden life, my sister? Is it in heaven? Certainly not: for He manifests Himself there, at His Father's right hand, resplendent with all the brightness of the Divinity! Is it upon the cross His life has been hidden? Yes; but that was only a partial concealment; for, in the midst of His ignominy and anguish, He manifests His power and greatness even there, when He utters that cry which shakes the foundations of the universe, when He covers the sun in the midst of his course with a dark veil, and reanimates the dry bones in the lowest depths of their graves. Where then is He really hidden? In the blessed Eucharist, my sister, where His glory, His life, His divinity, His humanity, all disappear, and are surrounded by an impenetrable veil. Does He not seem, as it were, altogether dead, and even annihilated? Does He exhibit the smallest indication of His presence there? He is silent, and you hear not His voice; open your eyes, and you cannot perceive the faintest ray of His light, nor the most evanescent feature of His beauty; speak, and nothing will reveal that He hears you; insult Him, and He will not vindicate His majesty. Whether He is blasphemed or adored, He exhibits the same impassibility, the same silence. What profound obscurity! What complete entombment and annihilation. Do you now comprehend what is meant by a life that is hidden with Jesus Christ? Is it not a life of profound humility, of voluntary obscurity—a life in which a soul is nothing in her own estimation, in which she wishes to be nothing in the estimation of others, in which she desires to be seen by God alone, in which she loves to bury her talents, her natural graces, her very virtues in silence and darkness, in which, so far from aspiring to preference, she only desires the lowest rank, in which she aims at nothing but humiliations, in which she labours incessantly to destroy self-love, to root out pride and self-esteem. This, my sisters, is perhaps what is most difficult in your obligations, and therefore most heroic in your condition. But how splendid is the reward which is annexed to this single victory? The soul which is truly humble enjoys peace, which is one of the most precious gifts of the Holy Spirit; and a religious community in which the virtue of humility reigns predominant, would be a faithful representation of heaven. Neither emulation, nor envy, nor the caprices of humour, nor contention, nor disobedience, nor murmurs, could be found to exist there. Every passion would be banished far from it along with pride, and all hearts would be united in one, because each

individual would prefer the interests of others to her own. Oh! my sister, you who aspire to be a spouse worthy of Him, follow His example in being meek and humble of heart. When you renounce the vanities of the world, do not go in pursuit of that vanity which may still be found in the house of the Lord —the distinctions and the pre-eminence which exist there. Enter, rather, into the sentiments of a holy prophet, who, although seated upon a throne, felt no hesitation in declaring that what made him delight in the sacred tabernacles was, to be able to forget his greatness within them, and undistinguished amidst the crowd, to fall down prostrate in the midst of them. Yes, his words were—and, oh! they were most beautiful expressions from the lips of a king—*I have chosen to be thus abject in the house of my God.** When the same David was assailed by the derisions of a proud princess, because, in the transports of a pious and ingenuous gladness, he divested himself of the ornaments of royalty, and was not ashamed to dance before the ark, he exclaimed, "If to humble myself in the presence of the Lord be a degradation, I will make myself a thousand times meaner than I have done, and I will set no limits to a humiliation which is so just." *Vilior fiam plus quam factus sum, et ero humilis.*† Such were the words of a holy king, ten hundred years before the Gospel had reprobated worldly glory, and made humility the foundation of every virtue. How dearly should a Christian virgin love humiliations when she has the counsels of the Gospel for a law, the Son of God, who hath abased Himself to our mortality, for a Spouse, and the most humble, as well as the most holy of all creatures, for a mother! Your spiritual birth should, therefore, be humble and obscure, like the birth of Mary. To complete the resemblance, I shall show that this ought to be the day upon which you are born to a holy and perfect life.

III.—The life to which Mary has been born upon this day is a holy and perfect life; first, in its beginning and in its whole career; and, secondly, in its object and its end. Exempted from original sin, under no subjection to the empire of concupiscence, filled from the very first moment of her existence with a superabundance of graces, Mary was destined never to fall into the most trifling fault, and never to suffer the splendour of her innocence to be dimmed by the least breath. She was the only dove, the beauty without stain in which the eye of God could not discover the smallest defect. *Tota pulchra*

* *Ps.* lxxxiii. 11. † 2 *Kings* vi. 22.

*es; et macula non est in te.** The Angels were less pure. Her Divine Son has alone surpassed her in sanctity.

I do not assert, my dear sister, that you can attain to such eminent perfection. Even to aspire to it, and to attempt to rival her who will not have an equal, would be an act of senseless temerity. But I fearlessly assert, and you are already aware of the fact, that to be called to a religious state is to be called to the perfection of Christianity; and that this perfection, which is only a counsel to others, will henceforth be a matter of precept to you. This will be your distinctive character and the source of your glory; but, at the same time, it ought to animate your zeal, to be the object of your solicitude, and to excite your vigilance. The vows which you are about to make to the Lord cannot be ineffectual. Not content with having renounced every thing which the law of God forbids in common with the rest of the faithful, you should, moreover, renounce the enjoyments which it allows, and the natural and lawful rights of your person and property. You must even divest yourself of your will by placing yourself beneath the holy servitude of obedience. The sacrifice cannot be greater. But heaven will require that you perform all that you promise. You can obtain no crown except that which is reserved for the perfect. This concerns every one of you, my sisters; for the very same covenant which your new associate is about to make with God has been made by you before her; and you can only be saved upon the same terms. The narrow way of the evangelical counsels is the only one which can lead you through the desert upon which you have entered to the true land of promise. Shall we, therefore, say that your lot is a hard one, and that you have reason to complain? On the contrary, my sisters, happy, a thousand times happy, is that soul who can abandon all that is but nothing, to embrace true and substantial goods—who has become poor in appearance to enrich herself with the treasures of eternity—who has despised treacherous pleasures, to taste the pure joys of the soul and the sweetness of divine consolations—who has imposed upon herself the necessity of loving her God with undivided affection, that she may oblige this generous Master to bestow His gifts upon her without reserve. The wisdom of such a choice is frequently appreciated by worldlings themselves; for how many are there who are engaged in the affairs of the world, who, in the midst of their fatigue, and drudgery, and anxiety, and,

* "Thou art all fair and there is not a spot in thee."—*Cant.* vi. 7.

perhaps, of their remorse, envy you the repose, the innocence, and the happiness of your solitude. This is great and real happiness—and such as no human language can express; but it can only be felt by fervent souls; the tepid and remiss can never enjoy it. Do you then desire, my dear sister, that the yoke of Jesus Christ should be easy, and that His burden should be light, according to His promise? Bear them like a faithful servant, and do not drag them on like a vile slave. Deserve, by your actions, that He may pour upon your soul that heavenly unction which renders every exertion easy, which alleviates every affliction, which fills up every void within the heart, and makes joy superabound, even in the midst of privations and sufferings. Obtain, by your ardour in serving and pleasing Him, that He may make you enjoy the perfumes of the Spouse which are so efficacious in bringing so many holy virgins in His train. Hasten in His paths. Set no limits to your desires of advancement and perfection. Dispute nothing with your God, and refuse Him no sacrifice. Always add to your zeal, your detachment from the world, your spirit of mortification and penance. Advance in love. Thirst after justice, that you may abundantly partake of those waters which spring up into eternal life; and that the hundred fold which is promised may be granted to you even in this world. Thus shall you imitate your august and incomparable model, as far as human infirmity will allow.

But her life has not only been holy and perfect in its beginning, and in its whole career; it has been peculiarly so in its object and its end. What has been the object of the birth of Mary? What end has God proposed to Himself in giving assistance to such a perfect creature? Why has she been sent into this world? Who can be ignorant of it? It is to execute the greatest of all the designs of the Almighty—to conceive and to bring forth Jesus Christ. Shall I continue the comparison which I have begun, my dear sister, and presume to assert that you can be admitted to share with her the privileges of the Divine Maternity? Most certainly, Mary is only the Mother of the Saviour. That is her title and her glory which she shares with no one else; and God forbid that I should extend it to any other creature. Nevertheless, it is quite certain that you, Christian virgins who hear me, are called upon in a very true sense to bring forth that self-same Saviour. Must you not feel interested in hearing such a mystery explained, or rather are you not enabled to explain it yourselves? For, what have you proposed to yourselves by embracing the religious state? What has been the great end

and object of this generous consecration to a life which is austere and laborious according to nature? Was it not to make the old earthly and carnal man die within you, and, at the same time, to conceive and bring forth the new spiritual and heavenly man in his place? But that old man was no other than yourselves, with the inclinations and appetites which you have received from your first parents; and who is the new man whom you shall bring forth? Have you not been always taught that it was Jesus Christ Himself into whom you have been transformed by His grace—who should be born, and grow up, and attain His full maturity in your souls, so that you may all say with St Paul, that you live not, but Christ liveth in you.

Has this miraculous and necessary transformation been wrought, my sisters? Has this end which is so essential to the religious life been accomplished? Is the child of the old Adam already dead? Has Jesus Christ Himself been substituted in his place? Is it Jesus Christ that thinks, and acts, and speaks, and breathes, within you? If you are outwardly invested with Him by the profession which you make of being His servants, and by His holy robes which you bear, have you also conceived Him inwardly by your love? Have you brought Him forth by the faithful imitation of His works, and the constant observance of His maxims? If He has been already born in your hearts, has He received an increase within them? Is there reason to hope that He will arrive at maturity, and that He will reach the fulness of a perfect man within them? Alas! have not His life and strength been, perhaps, diminished within you, day after day, since those first years of fervour in which you have begun to produce Him? Oh, my dear sisters, if there be any one of you who feel the spirit of grace weakened within you, and your first fervour diminished, was this the effect which you ought to experience in this house of prayer, at the very foot of the tabernacle and the altar, in the midst of so many helps, and the most abundant blessings? Alas! who could have imagined that when you were separated from the distractions of this world, devoted to silence and recollection, strengthened by holy meditations, and nourished with the very flesh of your God, that you would not feel inflamed with a new ardour, day after day, and that you should have hastened on unwearied in that course in which your first steps seemed to promise so much energy? Why should you have already lost breath, and grown weary and feeble, even whilst you are yet so far from the close of your career, why do you think of rest whilst others redouble their exertions, and will

soon deprive you of the crown which had been prepared for you? But am I justified in making use of such language—I who have received far more signal favours—I who have been consecrated in a most august manner by the unction of the holy oil, and that of the Spirit of God—I who am a servant in the house of the Lord, His representative and His minister—I who produce Him every day upon the altar, who bear Him in my hands, who announce His words, who distribute His most precious graces amongst the faithful—and who am all the while so far from following His example in my conduct, or from living as He lived, or from practising what I teach? Oh, my sisters, let us all receive a new birth on this day of the nativity of Mary; and let us be born again to all the sanctity of our vocation; and let us show, at length, that we are not unworthy of those great mercies with which our God has favoured us.

But above all others, let you who are at present the subject of our joy and of our hopes, and who share with Mary in the honour of this festival—you whom religion has, as it were, conceived in this very spot two years ago, whom she has borne during twenty-four months in her womb, and whom she brings forth this day—let you be born to a new and perfect life: grow up rapidly in grace; let your examples animate the fervour of those who have gone before you in this holy career, and inspire those who follow you with a noble emulation: let everything be renewed and bloom again in this asylum of piety; and let our Church, which is at length beginning to raise its head, which had been bowed down, glory no less in her virgins than in her pastors for the time to come.

O! Queen of Heaven, whom God has honoured amongst all His creatures! thou whom the Angels venerate, whom all the predestined invoke and cherish—thou who dost obtain from thy Divine Son whatever thou art pleased to ask for the benefit of mankind, beg of Him that He may this day vouchsafe to pour forth His choicest graces, His special blessings, and the energy and abundance of His Holy Spirit upon this humble sanctuary in which such an affecting ceremony is about to be celebrated. The sacred Scriptures teach us that being placed at His right hand, in His kingdom,* thou dost present before His throne the virgins who have been thy faithful imitators. *Adducentur regi virgines post eam.*† O, Mary! behold this virgin, who is willing to follow in thy footsteps, who fears not to exile her

* *Cant.* v.

† *Ps.* xliv. 15.

self from her Father's roof, to leave all that is dear to her, according to nature, to have no house but thine, no other father but God, no other mother than thyself alone—who is about to consecrate herself by irrevocable vows to the service of thy beloved Son. O, mother of mercy! be not insensible of so much devotedness and love. Her relatives, making nature yield to faith, will share her sacrifice, and surround the altar where that sacrifice must be consummated; and with their own hands they will place in thine this object of all their tenderness. Receive thy new daughter, therefore; grant her thy powerful protection—the most certain pledge of salvation; so that after having been received in thy family upon earth she may yet be admitted into that blessed society who, for all eternity, shall follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth. *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE PERNICIOUS EFFECTS OF BAD BOOKS.

"The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it inflameth the wheel of our nativity, being set on fire by hell: an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison."—*James* iii. 6, 8.

A FIRE has blazed through Europe for more than half a century; and it threatens to set the whole world in flames before long. This fire arises in the minds and hearts of men; it spreads by words; it communicates itself to whole nations; it burns at the foundations of states, and at the roots of social order; it undermines thrones and altars, changes the earth into one immense volcano, and seems destined to destroy the universe at last in one universal conflagration. Is it from hell that the first sparks of that flame have come forth? Yes; most certainly. It is *set on fire by hell*. Have wicked men served as instruments to the powers of darkness, to diffuse and extend its ravages? Yes; most certainly. Have the seditions and corrupting discourses of these men, their impious and furious declamations, been, as it were, the torches and brands with which they have set all around them on fire? Yes; the universe is a witness of the fact; and they boast of it themselves; it is their tongue has set the world in a blaze. *Lingua ignis est.* But let us explain ourselves, my brethren. If they had nothing else to produce such disastrous effects except the tongue and voice which they have received from nature, the mischief which they might cause would be very circumscribed, and of necessity limited to the narrow circle of hearers by whom they

may be surrounded; they require another tongue which is far more powerful—a tongue which never tires—another voice much louder than their own—a voice which may be heard at the same time in every place—another mouth besides their own, which may be ever open to circulate and vomit afar off the burning and ever succeeding waves of their calumnies and their blasphemy. This indefatigable tongue, my brethren, is their pen; this voice, which is everywhere heard, issues from their books; this mouth which continually vomits forth the fiery torrent with which it covers the whole earth is the press, which, at the present day, is so prolific, so criminal, so formidable to governments, to religion, and morality. In plain language, bad books and their pernicious circulation, are the fire which has come forth from the abyss—the fire which has caused such frightful devastation, and wrapped the two hemispheres in one destructive blaze. *Lingua inflammat rotam nativitatis nostræ, inflammata a gehenna.* Bad books multiplied almost to infinity—translated into every language—circulated with unlimited profusion throughout every country—filling every library—finding their way into every human habitation, from the rich man's palace and the philosopher's closet, to the labourer's cottage, the tradesman's workshop, and the poor man's hut—corrupting every age, every sex, every condition, every people; this is the *world of iniquity* of which the Apostle speaks, and which it is impossible to mistake, *Lingua universitas iniquitatis.* Bad books breathing revolution and war against the God of heaven, and against all the lawful powers of this earth—disturbing the Church, the state, the private circle, and every other society of men—exciting and inflaming every violent and vindictive passion—provoking discord and wars, and the revolutions of empires; this is the *impiety* which spreads universal agitation and terror, and no longer leaves any spot undisturbed throughout the world. *Lingua inquinatum membrum.* Bad books, insulting truth and modesty at every page—teaching the science of evil, the detestable trade of falsehood—perverting every intellect by their sophisms—defiling every imagination with their lascivious descriptions—destroying the rising seeds of virtue in the heart, and planting every wickedness and abomination in their place; this is the source of that *deadly poison* which fills the whole world with infection and death. *Lingua . . . plena veneno mortifero.* All the guilt which we see around us, and which we cannot too earnestly deplore—crimes, the most unprecedented and enormous, becoming ordinary events which no longer occasion the least surprise—the most horrible catastrophes exhibited

as daily spectacles to a cold curiosity which has now ceased to be excited by such atrocities—the eternal foundations of social order overturned—injustice converted into right—and licentiousness styled law—all that generations have revered as sacred for the last six thousand years consigned to ridicule and contempt—the most monstrous paradoxes of libertinism and infidelity converted into maxims and doctrines—morality abandoned, faith almost extinguished, and the ties of humanity itself forgotten: these are the fruits of bad books—the new poisoned branch which has sprung from the tree of knowledge, and which, as it were, produced the fruit of a second original sin, has once more perverted and degraded the human race. *Lingua maculat totum corpus.* How deep is this wound, my brethren, how poisoned! We shall endeavour to examine it to-day, and to exhibit to your view what corruption it contains. You will shudder with affright, but the evil will be known in its full extent, and you must conclude that you must either seek a remedy or perish.

To treat such a subject in its full extent, we should consider bad books under a three-fold relation, and show that they are the most dreadful scourges of morality and religion; that they are an active and terrible principle of destruction; and that, for this country in particular, they are a subject of reproach, and a source of calamities. But this would be an immense undertaking; and it would, perhaps, exceed the limits of the ministry which I exercise. It may be sufficient for the fulfilment of my duty, and for your instruction, to show you how destructive they are, first to morality, and secondly to religion.

Great God! when Thou gavest a free will to man whom Thou hast created, Thou hast said to him—*Avoid evil and do good.** This is an abridgment of Thy entire law. Men who are rebellious to this holy law, and leagued with hell against Thee, have said—"Let us destroy the good, let us establish the reign of evil upon earth." Their audacious, false, and impure pens have been the arms which they used to assail Thee; and my arms to repel their darts will be Thy divine and omnipotent Word. O my God! do Thou, therefore, place upon my lips that word of power and light which has overcome the world, and confounded the false sages at all times. May my spirit be silent, and Thy Spirit alone be heard; and at its voice may the darkness which has been gathered by the spirit of error be dissipated. *Exurgat Deus et dissipentur inimici ejus.*† *Ave Maria, &c.*

* 1 *Peter* iv.

† *Ps.* lxvii. 1.

I. Bad books are the most dangerous scourges to morality.

Have you ever considered, my brethren, what an immense corrupter a bad book is? First, it is a seductive and agreeable corrupter, created by the pernicious talents of some master who is well skilled in the art of perverting men, who has spared no pains to adorn it with every grace which can charm and captivate the mind, or to arm it with every dart which inflicts deep and mortal wounds upon the heart. Secondly, it is a shameless corrupter which feels no shame, and will not stop short at those limits which sometimes restrain the most dissolute man—which respects nothing, but drains the impure wine with which it is filled to the last drop into the heart of the reader. Thirdly, it is a corrupter which is listened to without shame, because the reader can peruse it in solitude, which he can listen to at his leisure, and during every hour of the day and night, until the contagion which it spreads has infected every sense, and been converted into the very substance of the soul.

Look at that young man who has seized, for the first time, upon one of those detestable books—one of these silent counsellors of iniquity with which the world is filled at the present day. See how impatient to learn a thousand disgraceful secrets he hastens to shut himself up along with this preceptor of vice to learn without distraction or disturbance those pernicious lessons which he seeks with so much avidity. See him, when he is alone and unobserved, how he clings to those seductive leaves, and bends above them, imbibing with avidity a mortal poison which quickly circulates through every vein, and penetrates into his inmost recesses, which disorders his reason, torments his mind, consumes his whole being, and flings him into an indescribable state of madness. He no longer recognises himself. What abominable phantoms have suddenly arisen in his imagination. What criminal desires have taken root in his heart. What ignominious passions have been excited within him in a moment. Where is he? What will become of him? Will he listen any longer to the voice of modesty, or duty, or conscience, or virtue? His new master has taught him that modesty is a weakness, that duty is an unmeaning phrase, that conscience is a prejudice, and virtue an idle fancy; that man, instead of being ashamed of the inclinations of nature, should glory in following them; that his sole duty is to procure his own enjoyment; that his privilege is to seek it wherever he finds it; that it is always proper to follow one's own natural inclinations; and that vice which promises pleasure is not vice but virtue; that such is the

doctrine of our sages, of our philosophers, of our famous writers, of our great men; that all contrary maxims are to be set down amongst the vain scruples and superstitions of those days of ignorance from which the lights of the age have delivered us for ever. Oh! unfortunate young man, what a science you have acquired. What blessings you have lost Who shall restore you all that a perusal of a few moments has deprived you of? You have begun to read it in a state of innocence; you shall finish that perusal in a state of reprobation. The seeds of every abomination have been planted in your bosom; they will soon grow up to maturity, and bring forth their fruits with a fatal rapidity. These passions, whose first revolts you experience, will soon become furious and ungovernable; they will hurry you into every excess, and fling you into every abyss of guilt. This reason, already obscured will be soon buried in the thickest darkness, and embrace all the monsters of error, as if they were the sublimest truths These still fearful doubts respecting the fundamental principles of morality will be changed into a daring contempt, and a declared aversion for every law of morality. You will make no other distinction between good and evil, except by your unbridled love for evil, and your implacable hatred for all that is good. You will acknowledge no difference between the man and the brute, but to exalt the brute, and to depress the man, to extol the beastly instinct, and to decry that severe and restless reason. The scourge of society, you will look for nothing but a prey to devour, and victims to sacrifice to your infamous lust. When you will be weary of gratifying them and when satiety will have brought on disgust, you will find other enjoyments of a more odious character in the pleasure of blasting and corrupting, in extending the empire of vice, and of the most pernicious doctrines, in multiplying the number of men who are as dissolute and perverse as yourself, until you devote yourself, at last, by horrible oaths and engagements, to the work of iniquity; you shall enter into one of those extensive confederacies which were formerly so secret, but which are so well known at the present day, in which men combine with each other, in the name of hell, for the destruction of all morality and virtue upon earth. Behold, my dear friends, what bad books lead to. Such are the conversions which they effect, and the devotedness which they inspire.

Calculate, if you can, the ravages which must be made by three millions of execrable volumes scattered through every portion of this vast empire, and every moment producing, upon

millions of hearers, the effects which I have just described. No: you cannot estimate them. If the seeds of corruption and death, which produce contagion and pestilence, were scattered through the air which we breathe, and poured abroad along with it through our cities and provinces, they would not cause bodily deaths with more fatal destructiveness than this pernicious inundation of impure and poisoned productions which kill the soul, destroy morality, and extinguish, amongst a whole people, all the sentiments of natural honesty and integrity which are the animating principles of human society. Oh, my God! tears and groans are far more appropriate than words to give expression to the profound and bitter grief that fills my heart when I see those sneering and audacious works, which are the production of a depravity that knows no limits, which provoke disorders and scandals of every sort—and whose very titles outrage public decency, and seem to proclaim that we have lost all shame, and that this great kingdom is nothing more than an extensive school of immorality and licentiousness, exhibited in every place, before the eyes of every age and sex. Must I explain my meaning at greater length? Must I mention the titles of those poems which have acquired a fatal celebrity—which seem to be dictated by the demon of impurity itself—which cannot be named without a blush! and yet every one reads them: and these notorious romances, on the very first page of which their authors have written, that merely to open them is certain destruction! and yet they fill almost every library—and these sacrilegious parodies on the Holy Scriptures, in which a divine language is travestied by the most monstrous audacity into the language of unclean spirits? and these shameless "confessions," in which self-styled sages relate the incredible acts of baseness and infamy which have disgraced their lives, in order that by such narratives they may encourage every vice, and prove themselves to be the accomplished models of every atrocity! and these treatises of "morality" which are nothing else than debauchery formed into axioms and dissoluteness reduced to precepts? and these dissertations upon "education," which are altogether sensual, in which the training of youth is reduced to the development of animal instinct, and of those faculties which are common to us with the brute? and these material books on "the mind," in which we are taught that the whole being of man consists in his body, and that the most filthy pleasures are his only and sovereign good? Weariness, disgust, and shame impede my utterance; and yet these are the productions, not of our vulgar pens, but of our boasted intellects, the coryphei of our

philosophy, the legislators of our new morality, the oracles of this age of light. You must admit, my brethren, that they are at least a little more injurious to morality than the examinations of conscience in our catechisms, and the instructions of our pastors, and the sacred hymns which are sung in our churches. What if I stirred up the filth of so many other abominable productions which are produced in such abundance by the unwearied activity of our presses—which are sold to the rich, and distributed gratuitously amongst the poor—which are flung, as a bait, to infancy and imprudent youth—which are scattered amongst the people, and forcibly thrust into the hands of all. What, then, is that amazing zeal of perverting and corrupting every one which so eagerly desires to insinuate vice into the hearts of all at any price, and to place the study of guilt within the reach of every intellect, and every class of society?—which sometimes, under the specious and hypocritical title of "philosophical catechisms," initiates youth in the infamous secrets of debauchery, and in all the detestable elements of the science of profligates, and sometimes, under the seductive titles of useful advice and instructions for artisans and agriculturists, exhibits a mass of obscenity and atrocity, such as never entered into the imagination of pagan licentiousness, to the eyes of these simple men: sometimes under forms as little suspected—such, for instance, as that of a popular almanac, or an elementary book of calculation, or even sometimes of a prayer book—conceals the most detestable maxims of impiety and libertinism, and teaches the ignorant multitude that there is neither God, nor conscience, nor any real distinction between good and evil, nor any other law but interest, nor any other happiness but the pleasures of the senses, nor any other motive to abstain from the blackest crimes, except the fear of executioners and punishments? Such are the lessons which are perseveringly hawked about the suburbs of our cities, in our hamlets, and country places, under the very eyes of public authority—which form a code of authenticated and national instruction, that becomes the common doctrine of a whole people, and are infallibly preparing for us a generation, not of men destitute of all faith and mortality, but of real monsters. Add to these the rapid and continual circulation of all these light and corrupting journals which are published every day, and borne every hour as if upon the wings of the wind, from the capital to the inmost parts of the most remote provinces, which continually traverse the whole extent of France, scattering in their course the poisonous seeds of every passion, and every vice. After all this, can we feel sur-

prised that our generation should daily exhibit instances of a perverseness hitherto unheard of! that our tribunals should feel terror-stricken at the causes which they have to decide, and the crimes which they are obliged to punish! that our prisons should already swallow up children perfect in guilt, and wretches who, as they had become malefactors from principle, feel astonished that they should be condemned for having practised the morality which all our books inculcate, and for having guided their actions with that light which our philosophy had held forth for their direction? O, great God! can it be true to say that there is no remedy for this evil which is unprecedented in the history of human calamities? that no means are left even to the wise and the powerful to defend Thy people against the audacious and unheard-of assaults, of public and undisguised seduction, and of general perversion and demoralization? Have we really arrived at such a state of things that all power must bow down, and that every law must remain silent in the presence of that imaginary right which is claimed by the wicked, of spreading the contagion of their vices, and communicating the poison of their abominable and infernal wisdom? But, O Lord! to suppose this, would be to blaspheme Thy providence, as Thou hast established authority upon earth, for the suppression of vice, and the protection of virtue; but even if such could possibly be the case, I could only say—"Let us weep over the total and irreparable ruin of morality; let us weep over the greatness of all calamities, and the inevitable ruin of all human concerns, for neither laws, nor power, nor the state itself can long subsist without morality."

Ah, Lord! if Thou hast still compassion upon this kingdom, which had been once so dear to Thee—if Thou wilt not leave us to perish after having already wrought so many miracles for our salvation—remove from our minds that most grievous and fatal of all errors: inspire those who govern us with salutary counsels: make them feel the indispensable necessity of curbing such dangerous licentiousness: may they seek, and, in spite of every difficulty, may they find effectual means of destroying it. Such must be the prayer of every sincere friend to social order and virtue. But, O Christians! do not rest content with mere good wishes. Let each one of you descend into his own conscience, and examine, in the presence of God, whether he is himself innocent of the calamities which he deplores; for, insulted morality addresses its reproaches not only to authors, venders, and distributors of those pernicious works, but also to those who purchase them, or read them, or

detain them in their possession; to those fathers and mothers of families, those masters and mistresses whose libraries are the receptacles of poison, where their children and servants secretly imbibe such draughts of death; to those teachers of youth who do not tear from their hands and banish from the sight of their pupils those objects of such an excited and fatal curiosity; to all those who have it in their power, and who are obliged by the duty of their state of life or employment to stop the ravages of such a torrent, and who assist its course by placing no obstacle in its way, and thus suffer all morality and social order to be swept away by its overwhelming waters. Remember, that such an enormous public scandal and in such excessive dangers to morality, not to struggle against the mischief, is to become an accomplice in it—not to banish its contagion far away, is to be infected with that contagion—not to forbid the admission of those books which are filled with the impure filth of the most disgraceful passions into your houses, is to defile yourselves with their corruption and to disseminate that corruption amongst others—in a word, that in this deadly war, which every vice, sustained by every error, is at present waging against virtue, not to take an open stand on the side of virtue is to embrace the cause of vice. *Qui non est mecum contra me est.**

II.—Bad books are the most dangerous scourges to religion. Oh! holy and divine religion, who art the foundation of all morality, as morality is the support of social order and governments, hast thou received greater respect from those bold corrupters of nations who, to use the words of St. John, have made all the earth to drink of the wine of their fornication. *A vino iræ fornicationis suæ potarit omnes gentes.*† Alas! my brethren, what a fresh source of affliction do we not open here. How has the religion of Clovis and Charlemagne and St. Louis been extinguished amongst us? What has befallen this sacred and most precious portion of the inheritance of our fathers? O France!—thou who hast been so long faithful to thy God—thou who hast gloried for more than fourteen hundred years in the name of Catholic France—how hast thou undergone such a sudden change! O most Christian nation! how hast thou demolished thy temples, broken down thy altars, murdered thy priests and pontiffs, replaced thy sacred solemnities by impure orgies, made blasphemy succeed to religion, and almost broken the covenant of thy ancient alliance with

* "He that is not with Me is against Me."—*Luke* xi. 23.
† *Apoc.* xiv. 8.

the Lord and with His Christ? What has made so much hatred and violence succeed to so much veneration and love? Need I ask you the question, my brethren? Can any one of you be ignorant of it? Ah! this cry, this watch-word of the most sacrilegious war, this expression of the most inconceivable rage, will be heard in the remotest posterity to inspire it with eternal horror. "Crush them, crush them." What? "The infamous atrocities." And what do they designate by such a title? Oh, holy altars! forgive me for concluding the sentence. Oh, just Heaven! the meaning of these words is—"Crush Jesus Christ His religion, and His Church." At this furious cry which has been uttered by the two famous writers of the last century, an immense confederation of sophists, and wits, and philosophers, has been formed to conspire for the destruction of Christianity. The world was overwhelmed by a deluge of Deistical, Atheistical, Sceptical, and Materialist books, in which all their fury was breathed forth against the religion of the true God—in which its doctrines and mysteries were hooted at, its divine morality unworthily ridiculed and calumniated, its pure and sublime worship represented as a gross superstition, its law of love treated as a barbarous fanaticism, its ministers consigned to public hatred as impostors and enemies of mankind. These are the books which, from being circulated everywhere with impunity these forty years, and devoured with avidity by every class of readers, established a truly anti-Christian state of society amongst us, which made impiety and even Atheism popular, and which, by exciting the violent passions of a multitude without restraint, as it was without God, and goading them even to madness, armed them at length with the axe which hewed down the sacred structure, and with the swords which deluged the earth with the blood of the priests of Jesus Christ. At length when the great work was accomplished, when God seemed overcome by hell, and His worship was abolished, triumphant infidelity proclaimed in the midst of slaughter and ruin, that, "books had done all," and placed the authors of them, like new gods of the age, in their Pantheon.

And these are the books which are circulated with more profusion than ever in France, after it has again returned to Christianity: which are re-published day after day in every possible shape; which are printed for the youth in our cities, and re-printed for the people in their cottages; which are exhibited for sale in our streets and public places; which are offered to the curious in their learned cabinets; which are hawked about, and sold, and praised, and lent, and given as

presents, in order that by any efforts, and in any way whatsoever, these books, which are so filled with apostacy and blasphemy, may become the food of all minds and the universal study of all who are able to read. What else do they wish—and they do not conceal it: for those very books incessantly repeat it—what else do they endeavour to effect but a second revolt against religion, perhaps more fatal and decisive than the first? Who can be so blind as not to see that the spirit of revolution pervades every doctrine which they inculcate, that it broods upon their hearts, and works within them; and, that if it has not yet burst forth in all its fury, it gives us sufficient warning, by a thousand alarming signs, of the danger with which it threatens us, as the dreadful tempests while confined within the black and dense clouds, before they burst over our heads, roar for some time with a stifled and terrible sound, and send forth the lightnings which precede the coming thunder! Ah! when the ministers of the divine word announced, fifty years ago, with such a prophetic voice, that the philosophers of these books, to which we refer, would occasion the fall of altars and the ruin of the ancient Church of France; that Church was still in all vigour, and seemed proof against every storm, supported, as she was, upon the hereditary veneration of the people, upon fourteen centuries of glory and benefit, and the deep roots which she had shot so deeply into the very foundations of the state. But that powerful Church fell with a crash that has been heard through the whole world, and the monarchy has also fallen upon her ruins. And now when the very same cause of destruction acts with renewed vigour and with unrestrained freedom—when obscene and impious books, multiplied like the sands on the sea shore, and scattered amongst the very lowest classes of society, are exciting the whole world to a revolt against Heaven—shall we not tremble for our national Church which is but just restored to animation, which appears amongst us weak and unsupported, and like a stranger in the midst of a new generation which has not known her in the days of her glory—a generation which has no sooner opened its eyes to the light than it beheld her calumniated, proscribed, and dragged like a criminal to the scaffold—a generation which has taken in the most bitter prejudices against religion and its ministers at its mother's breast, and which is still exasperated and provoked against it by all the declamation and blasphemy which the hatred of Christianity can inspire. What facts could I not state respecting the increase of irreligion and immorality amongst the people—an increase which is daily becoming more sensible and more rapid

ever since this unrestricted permission of writing and printing has overflowed beyond measure, and is no longer confined by any banks! But why should I state what is already so notorious? Do not facts themselves speak expressly enough? Do not so many public indications of hatred and contempt for holy things and persons consecrated to God, so many outrages profusely offered every day to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, so many sanctuaries profaned, so many tabernacles broken by a sacrilegious fury which nothing can restrain—do not all these speak impressively enough, and render it unnecessary for me to afflict your piety by such a melancholy recital? In such a state of things, which is every moment becoming worse, if men continue to feed their minds with all the poison of libertinism and atheism, the hour may not be far distant—O God, Thou wilt not suffer it; Thou wilt avert such a dreadful calamity—but to judge of effects by their causes, and of the future by the past, will not the moment at length arrive when the holy religion of our fathers, the religion of the Catholic world, the religion which is at present styled the religion of the state, the only religion which, assailed by the hatred of hell and its evil ones, will also be the only religion which it will be impossible to protect in the state, in opposition to a multitude corrupt in its morality, perverted in its faith, intoxicated by the fanaticism of impiety—a multitude to whom so many books are continually imparting monstrous notions of the Christian religion and its ministers, and repeating that no happiness can be found except in the abolition of one and the complete extermination of the other.

But should I speak of the multitude alone! Have the lessons of vice and infidelity no attractions except for the vulgar? Alas! the most dangerous and seductive works—those in which blasphemy is most artfully stated, and sophistry presented in its most seductive shape, and calumny seasoned with its most pungent bitterness—in which all that can flatter and excite the passions of the heart is most skilfully combined with all that can dazzle and delude the intellect—in which all the foundations of morality and faith and social order itself are most ingeniously and perfidiously undermined—in short, the works of the notorious teachers of our anti christian philosophy—are not they read with avidity by the learned world, by the polished world, and above all others, by that countless youth of every condition of life who are brought up around us to fill up all the ranks of society, in the course of time! Are not these the works which are studied by them—the models on which they form their reasoning—the sources from which they derive all their

doctrines and opinions? Now, I ask you, when the continual perusal of those books shall have made the spirit of irreligion and licentiousness which these books breathe and which they contain, at length become the prevailing spirit of every class of society —of those who command as well as of those who obey—of those who enact and interpret the laws, and of those who execute them—what power can prevent us from falling again into that frightful moral, religious, and political anarchy out of which we have been extricated by the visible miracle of divine mercy and omnipotence?

Perhaps I exaggerate the pernicious influence which is exercised by the writings of the infidel sect upon religion and morality. Listen, then, to what has been said about the middle of the last century, not by one of the adversaries of this sect, but by one of its most celebrated leaders and oracles, the Citizen of Geneva, who should astonish us no less by the energy of those admissions which his conscience sometimes extorted from him, than by the amazing eccentricity into which he was hurried by his pride. Listen to him, my brethren; he speaks in a tone which is grave enough to justify me in repeating his words in this pulpit.

"Would to God," he says, "that the majority of our writers had remained unoccupied. Morality would then be more pure and society more peaceable. But these vain rhapsodists swarm from every side, armed with their mischievous paradoxes, undermining the foundations of faith, and destroying virtue. They contemptuously sneer at what they designate the old-fashioned phrases of country and religion, and they devote their talents and philosophy to undervalue and to destroy all that is sacred amongst mankind. What do the writings of the most notorious philosophers contain? One pretends that there is no God except this world; another, that good and evil are chimerical fancies; another, that men, like the beasts of the forest, may devour each other without scruple. These are the wise maxims which they teach, and which we transmit from age to age to our posterity. Has paganism, even when abandoned to all the wanderings of human reason, transmitted anything to posterity that is capable of being compared with the disgraceful memorials which printing has created under the dominion of the Gospel? The infidel writings of Leusippus and Diagoras have perished along with themselves; but, thanks to the printer's types and to the use which we make of them, the dangerous reveries of Hobbes and Spinosa will last for ever. Go, celebrated characters! of which the simplicity of our fathers had not been capable, accompany those still more dangerous

works which exhale the corruption of morals in our generation to our posterity: and carry along with you to future ages a faithful history of our advancement and our sciences. If they read you, and if they are not more senseless than ourselves, they will raise their eyes to heaven, and exclaim in the bitterness of their souls, 'Oh, Almighty God! who holdest in Thy hand the destinies of mankind, deliver us from the destructive illumination of our fathers, and restore us to innocence, the only blessing which can procure our happiness, the only one which is precious in Thy sight.'" Such are the energetic expressions of a censor who will not be very strongly suspected; nevertheless, he did not conceive them to be strong enough to express his views, and he accordingly subjoins this memorable declaration—"If we contemplate the alarming disorders which printing has already caused in Europe, and, if we judge of the future by the progress which the mischief has made from day to day, it is easy to foresee that sovereigns will yet repent of having introduced this terrible art into their states."

Such were the opinions respecting the publication of infidel works, and the calamities which may be feared from their circulation, of one who was himself a licentious and infidel writer, and who gave expression to them forty years before his own works had shaken the world to its foundations by the most disastrous of all revolutions. And shall we, instructed by such fatal experience—we, who have been the eye-witnesses of a catastrophe unparalleled in the annals of the world—shall we have yet to learn what the extent and greatness of that danger is which he was able to estimate and to foretell so long before it occurred? Shall we still regard it as an act of wisdom not to fix any limits to its progress, not to impose any restraint upon the use of that liberty, whilst even those who abused it knew how formidable its effects were, and whilst we ourselves have seen it suddenly, and as it were by enchantment, under our very eyes, causing the complete dissolution of social and religious order?

Alas! my dear friends, instead of repeating the predictions of others, I shall suffer myself to make one in turn, and to say with that freedom which is one of the attributes of my ministry, and what the light of faith, assisted by that of experience and reason, enables me to see in futurity—I must say it—with a heart crushed by grief and oppressed with anguish. The danger, my brethren, the great danger consists in this—that God may at length grow weary of being insulted, day after day, openly and with impunity, in the midst of a nation which He has loaded with His favours—of being personally the object of

all the derision and satire, the perpetual subject of the ridicule of writers and readers, as if He were one of those gods who had not ears to hear, nor eyes to see, nor an arm to strike. He has hitherto taken revenge upon us by favours alone. He has filled up that abyss which our impiety had opened under our feet, and which was about to swallow us up already. He has built up those ruins by which we had been surrounded, and healed the wounds which He had inflicted, and broken the sceptres of iron and yokes of brass which we had forged to ourselves, and extinguished the fires of those desolating wars, which had armed all nations against each other, which made the whole world a scene of mourning and a field of slaughter. At the first sign of our repentance He has been pleased again to enter those temples from which our fury had banished Him, and to appear once more upon the throne of His mercy in those sanctuaries which had been torn and mutilated by our hands, and are still crimsoned by the blood of His ministers which we have shed. What return should not the God of goodness expect for all these favours? Yet what have we done to testify our gratitude towards Him? We have proclaimed His holy religion to be the religion of the state. That religion in which we have been born—which has been the religion of our country during the last fifteen hundred years, and the religion of the Catholic world for eighteen centuries—did not require such a title at our hands. But how have we treated it ever since we have styled it the religion of the state? We must confess, my brethren, that this "religion of the state" is the only religion which is publicly despised, insulted, and blasphemed amongst us—the only one which is consigned, undefended, to the indecent caprices, the impure sarcasms, the monstrous calumnies of the most licentious and impious pens. If every other religion were assailed in the same manner, we could find protection in the principles of our toleration and philosophy; but, when thousands of writers combined, inveigh against the religion of the true God; when they overwhelm it with insults of every kind, we behold all those excesses without emotion. What do I say? With eager curiosity we read those productions of impiety run mad; we seek them with eagerness; we glory in possessing them amid those precious collections which adorn our libraries. And if anyone speaks to us about the offended dignity of God, perhaps we will answer with coldness that these books amuse us after all; that the world at large admires them; and that if the interests of God are impaired by them, it is not for us but for Him to revenge those injuries which He sustains. This is precisely what

I fear—that He may not actually take revenge upon the authors and possessors of those works of blasphemy—of those who have formed the idol, as well as of those who have offered the sacrilegious worship. My fear is, that those monuments of a furious hatred of the Deity—a hatred which was even unknown to paganism, and which had remained concealed in the depths of hell, even to our own days—may not bring down the thunder of heaven upon your houses, your families, and yourselves. The more extensive this evil is, and authorized by almost universal example, the more my alarm is increased; for it is in punishment of great public crimes in which all, or almost all, participate, that the Divine wrath bursts upon nations.

Now, how atrocious a crime is this to which I refer. If you would learn the full extent of its enormity, my brethren, suppose a stranger, a barbarian, had come from the extremities of the world into this Christian kingdom, and had beheld in all our libraries, in the streets, and public squares of our cities, this immense number of pretended philosophical writings which are everywhere exposed to view—struck with the uniformity of so many violent declamations, and ignorant of their object, would he not at length inquire, "What is this religion which you detest so much—which I see described in such frightful colours in so many of your books—which you designate by no other titles save those of hypocrisy, superstition, and fanaticism, and whose destruction seems to be indispensably requisite for your happiness? Who is this Christ for whom your writers seem to have so much aversion—on whom they lavish so many insults—whom they are always designating as 'infamous'? Who are those priests and pontiffs who are everywhere represented to be the most guilty of all mankind and the most dangerous enemies of human nature?" He should be told in reply that this religion, which is so violently outraged, is the religion of our fathers and our own—the religion of the state and nation in which those books are published—that this Christ, who is the subject of so many blasphemies, is the God whom we adore, and whom our country has adored from its earliest origin—that He is the God to whom all our temples are consecrated—the God to whom all our prayers and aspirations are addressed; that those priests who are pursued with so much fury, are the ministers of our God and of the Church which He has established; that they are the guardians of the deposit of faith and morality; that they inculcate virtue, celebrate the Divine mysteries, administer sacred remedies into our souls, instruct our children, console the afflicted, sustain

the courage of the dying, offer the sacrifice of expiation for the dead, and diffuse the blessings of heaven all over the earth. Picture to yourselves the astonishment and indignation of this stranger at such an explanation. Do you not imagine you hear him exclaim "Ah! that is enough. I leave you; I return to my own savage country. Better to suffer a thousand deaths than to live in the midst of a people who treat the God whom they adore, the God of their fathers and their ministers, in such a manner. Either this God is nothing more than a vain phantom, or else He will make this people an example of justice and rigour which must for ever terrify perjured and infidel nations. Most certainly fire must fall down from heaven upon this accursed land, or else it will open and swallow up its sacrilegious inhabitants, or some other more awful calamity will punish such daring impiety."

Alas! my brethren, does God require any other avengers to punish us besides those very books in which all our guilt consists? Only let the doctrines which they advocate once more succeed to the doctrines of the Gospel, and hell will again be open in the midst of us. Calamities of every sort will come forth, from these books much more really than from the fabled box of antiquity—hatred, discord, sedition, civil war, proscriptions, murders, suicides, all the scourges and all the crimes which make the earth desolate: order, society, the ties of family, the protection of the laws, all law, all humanity, all restraint, will have vanished for ever: the impure temples of reason will replace those sanctuaries where the thrice holy God is now invoked? instead of the sacred and venerable objects of our homage, hideous effigies and infamous prostitutes will be seen once more upon our altars: we shall no more behold the ministers of peace, the tribunals of reconciliation, or the unbloody sacrifice; we shall only see executioners, scaffolds, and tortures.

Oh, my God! when Thou wert grievously provoked against Thy people, Thou hast said—"I will turn away my countenance from them; I will hide my face from their eyes." *Abscondam faciem meam ab eis.** "I will let them go—oh! dreadful malediction!—I will suffer them to follow their own inventions and systems." *Ibunt in adinventionibus suis.*† "I will behold them without compassion rushing on to the abyss into which their folly had hurried them, and perishing, victims of their own madness." *Et intelligam in novissimis eorum.*‡ Oh,

* *Deut.* xxxii. 20.
† *Ps.* lxxx. 13.
‡ *Ps.* lxxii. 17.

Lord! grant that Thou mayest not exercise such rigorous punishment upon us! We are not all guilty. If there are infidels and blasphemers amongst us, there are also pious and faithful souls who are inflamed with a sincere and ardent zeal for Thy glory. We shall all return to Thee in the sincerity of our hearts. Perish for ever those detestable books which have taught us to blaspheme Thy sacred name! We will break to pieces those idols of our pride; we will consign those monuments of our fury to the flames; and, having thus purified our houses from contagion, we shall sanctify our hearts; and lifting up to Thee hands which shall be pure and innocent evermore, we shall confidently implore those powerful blessings which are the only source of the prosperity of individuals and empires—blessings which I sincerely wish you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

SERMON ON MEDITATION UPON THE TRUTHS OF ETERNITY.

PREACHED AT THE OPENING OF A RETREAT IN TIME OF JUBILEE.

"With desolation is the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart."—*Jerem.* xii. 11.

WHERE is the man, my brethren, that does not experience a profound feeling of sorrow, and is not tempted to shed tears, when he contemplates the present condition of the world and of society. This is really the age when desolation has reached its height—when calamities are almost without limits. We come forth, as if by a miracle, from the midst of ruins, and from the depths of a frightful chaos. France and Europe, as we knew them thirty years since, have been swallowed up before our eyes in the vast abyss of the most devouring revolutions; morality, laws, our country, civilization itself, have been all buried beneath the waters of that second deluge. But they are now restored to their primitive order. We behold states and kingdoms rising above the waves, and slowly forming into a settled and regular state. Institutions are now as necessary to be given to the people as at the period of their infancy, when they rose from the cradle of barbarism. Efforts must now be made to find and collect the scattered elements of public happiness, as the fragments of shipwreck are gathered

together. The earth upon which we tread, which had been shaken by so many violent commotions, seems still to tremble beneath our feet. A short time since we beheld it with terror, covered with ashes and ruins, streaming with the blood of our relatives, our friends, our rulers, our pontiffs, our most virtuous citizens, and exhibiting nothing on every side but an aspect of mourning and desolation. *Desolatione desolata est omnis terra.*

But if we be asked what has been the cause of such a dreadful subversion, of a catastrophe, the bare thought of which will bring terror to the most distant generations, must we not confess that our thoughtlessness and our folly have been the cause of all our misfortunes; that forgetting the God who created us, and forgetting ourselves, we have ceased to know the value and the necessity of religion, of its morality and its doctrines; that the apostles of infidelity and falsehood, availing themselves of our criminal neglect, have propagated their detestable doctrines, and broken off the only restraint which kept the impetuous passions of the people within due limits; that a nation without faith, or religious observance, must soon become regardless of all law or morality; that all sorts of calamities have followed in the train of public apostacy and sacrilege; that the majesty of the kings of this earth could not be respected when the Divine Majesty had become an object of ridicule and contempt; that man could not scruple to destroy his fellow-man, when he began to recognize nothing in him that had made him superior to the brute; and, finally, that the whole world must be threatened with a complete subversion, from the period when the fear of the Lord, the immortality of the soul, the distinction between vice and virtue, when duty and conscience, have all been set down as prejudices and errors? Who could not believe, my brethren, that truths which are so striking in themselves, and confirmed by such recent and awful experience, ought not to make a profound impression upon our hearts, and ought not to become the subject of our most serious meditations? Yet, little do we reflect upon them. Satisfied with groaning beneath the calamities which afflict us, we do not strive to find their true source, and to look for a certain remedy. We are never tired of indulging in murmurs and complaints against individuals, and against the events which are daily occurring; we are unwilling to recognize, above all human and national causes, an enraged God, who vindicates His outraged laws, who chastises our unfaithfulness and ingratitude, and who, after having twice released us by the prodigies of His mercy out of the abyss into

which His justice had thrust us, may at length plunge us into it for the last time, without the possibility of ever more escaping from it, if we delay any longer to enter into our own hearts, and to return back to Him by a sincere repentance. *Desolatione desolata est omnis terra, quia nullus est qui recogitet corde.*

However, my brethren, you should take care not to persuade yourselves into the belief that temporal scourges, however severe and afflicting they may seem, are the most rigorous punishments which He inflicts upon those who abandon Him. He reserves others which are far more terrible, in the treasures of His vengeance. Oh, sinners, who hear me, I see you threatened with a danger, in comparison with which all the calamities of this world are but nothing! Eternal punishments await you, unless you amend your lives. Your consciences have been long threatening you with this in secret, and you have been more than once compelled to feel how dreadful your condition was; but all your efforts are directed to blind and stupefy yourselves, and you madly hasten to that dreadful abyss which the wrath of the Almighty has opened to punish his victims there for all eternity. You are perhaps falling into it this very moment; and it is in the hope of tearing away the illusion which blinds you, and of making you stop short on the brink of a precipice, that I ascend this pulpit. You, and the other sinners who resemble you, are the objects of all the solicitude as well as of all the sorrow of the Church, your mother. She cannot bring herself to suffer you to perish. It is for your sakes she stirs up the zeal and charity of her ministers, and commands them to announce the dreadful justice and the great mercy of the Lord—to exhibit eternity to your view, and to make you consider your origin and your last end. It is in order to allow you the most effectual means for your conversion and salvation, that she proclaims these jubilees, and opens the treasures of her indulgences, and provides those precious seasons of retreat, that is to say, of recollection and holy meditation. She is well aware that your dreadful condition arises from your dissipation and forgetfulness of yourselves; that if she could induce you to enter into your own hearts, and to bestow an attentive consideration upon your position and your danger, your salvation will be certain. What happiness would it then be for you, my dear brethren, and what consolation for myself, if I could take you away for a few days from that vortex in which you are plunged, and conduct you into this interior solitude, where the Divine light will shine upon your minds, and dissipate your fatal illusions. This is the object to which

all my efforts shall be directed; I entreat you to assist them. And that you may the better understand what we expect you should attend to, in the present course of pious instructions and exercises, I shall direct your attention to two important truths which will form the subject of this preliminary discourse —first, that your most urgent and indispensable necessity is to reflect upon your eternal interests; and, secondly, that you cannot have a more favourable opportunity of reflecting upon them with profit than that which is offered during the present holy season.

O my God! I am now entering upon an undertaking, the extent of which alarms my weakness. Support me, that by the assistance of Thy grace I may fulfil it. Alas! who am I, that I should undertake the duties of a ministry which is worthy of Thy prophets? How shall I presume to upbraid the sinner with his prevarications when I feel myself overwhelmed by the recollection of my past transgressions and by the oppressive weight of my daily infirmities. Ah! if Thou Thyself art pleased to send me, O Lord, notwithstanding my great unworthiness—if it be Thy will that I should bring back to the paths of Thy commandments those whom their passions have forced to stray from them, and that the unjust should be converted by my voice—vouchsafe, above all, to purify my heart, to blot out every defilement, and to heal those wounds which are still festering in my soul. It is only then I shall be able to proclaim the sanctity and the rigour of Thy judgments. *Deliver me from blood, O God, thou God of my salvation; and my tongue shall extol Thy justice.** *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—Amongst those who hear me there can be no more than three classes of persons—those who have lost the faith, and retain nothing more than the name of Christians; those who believe the Christian religion and do not practise it, but regard it merely as a vain theory, and follow the inclination of their passions; and those who believe what it teaches, and practise what it commands. Now, I maintain that for each of these three classes of persons there is no more immediate and indispensable necessity than to reflect seriously upon the concerns of their souls and their eternal destiny. To which of these classes, my dear brother, do you belong? First, are you an infidel? Oh, my dear friends, to what a state are we reduced. What an insult would have been offered to a Christian assembly in former days if it were assumed that it was in any respect composed of sceptics and unbelievers. With

* *Ps.* l. 16.

what noble indignation, and with what sacred sorrow, would it not have arisen to repudiate such an injurious suspicion. How vehemently would every member of it have protested his inviolable fidelity to his baptism and his God. How they would have exclaimed with one voice that they were ready to sacrifice their lives, but that they would never surrender the precious gift of faith, and the blessed hopes which it held out. Ah! in those times of afflicting but immortal memory, when paganism still reigned, and the scaffolds were daily erected for the punishment of the faithful, impiety, misguided philosophy, and the hatred of the true God everywhere prevailed except in those places where the rising flock of Jesus Christ assembled together: but such vices were never able to find their way into these sacred assemblies; adorers in spirit and in truth, and fervent and devout souls who preferred death to apostacy, could alone be seen around the altars of the Lamb. The Church, surrounded on the outside with heretics and idolaters, with scoffers at her doctrine and cruel persecutors, enjoyed peace, at least within, and found in her bosom none but docile children. But, alas! in our days, her most dangerous enemies are to be found amongst her own children. Those whom she has regenerated by baptism, whom she has nourished with her purest milk, whom she invites to a participation in all her treasures, blaspheme all that she adores, insult her mysteries and her faith, tear her heart asunder, and make all the efforts in their power to overwhelm her with reproaches. You belong to this number then, my dear friend; you acknowledge that you are an infidel; that is to say, you reject all that relates to religion, or, which comes to the same thing, you have formed a religion for yourself according to your caprice; and by that course you have altogether shaken off the yoke of the invisible and omnipotent Master of the universe. You do not care to know that He has a right to command mankind, or that He prescribes a worship which they should practise towards Him, or that He has established a Church upon earth to be the ever-infallible and ever-living interpreter of His will, or that He will punish the contempt of His authority and the violation of His laws upon a future day. You are not curious to learn why you have received existence, or with what design you have been placed in this world, or what destiny awaits you after death. You live in a contemptuous indifference with respect to all this; and you are accustomed never to think of it. But I appeal to your very reason, and to that natural intelligence which is common to all mankind, whether any course can be more rash or more desperate than this? Can there be a more

egregious folly than to sleep upon the brink of an abyss, and to expose your eternal happiness or misery to mere accident? You cannot be ignorant that a certain religion exists as long as the world; and it has its history which ascends to the remotest origin of all things created—its prophecies, the date of which is certain and their fulfilment a sensible fact—its miracles so well attested that all the arguments of the most sophistical infidelity tremble before the proofs which establish them, its morality so pure that it can only have come down from Heaven—its doctrines so sublime that God alone could have been the author of them. You are aware that this religion has triumphed over idolatry, confounded the various sects of philosophers, defeated all the powers of the earth, and brought the whole world in subjection to it; that its preservation throughout the course of ages is a miracle; that the perpetuity of its pastors is another; that the invariable uniformity of its doctrine in every place and at every period of time is a no less amazing prodigy; that its books have extorted the admiration of the infidels themselves, by the striking character of the Divinity which is impressed upon them; that it has everywhere produced heroic virtues, and elevated man above nature; that it has civilized savage tribes, polished the manners of ferocious people, and given order and stability to barbarous nations; that millions of men, in every part of the earth have sealed its truth with their blood; that it has been embraced and defended by the loftiest intellects of antiquity and modern times; that, during the time of our ancestors, in that great age when the glory of literature and science was carried to such an extent, when so many immortal productions did honour to the human intellect, every one believed it, because every one studied it and knew it; that, even at the present day, those who are the most enlightened, the wisest, the most virtuous members of society profess and revere it; that, during those years just gone by, some of its most celebrated and most violent adversaries have returned to it with credit after having long blasphemed it, declaring that ignorance and pride had alone induced them to assail it, and whilst they earnestly abjured their errors, confessed to those who felt indignant at their return to the faith—"We have believed, because we have examined; if you examine in your turn you will also believe as we have done."

And it is this religion which is so sacred and venerable—this religion, which is established upon such a solid foundation—that you have the temerity to reject as a fable without having condescended to make yourself acquainted with its

proofs, without so much as a knowledge of its first principles? Senseless mortal that you are, upon what authority do you rely? who are your securities? In the first place they are men of dissolute and unsteady characters, who have never applied their minds to any serious consideration, and amuse the frivolity of worldly societies with obscene jests combined with impious sarcasms. Again, they are men without principle, and even of suspected integrity, to whom you would not entrust your most unimportant concerns, and yet you risk your soul and your salvation upon what they assert. Moreover, they are licentious writers, poets, romancists, and pretended philosophers, who detesting Christianity through a hatred of its morality—having no other principle or rule of action except to undermine and subvert every rule and every principle—are not ashamed to contradict themselves at every page—becoming in turn deists, atheists, and pyrrhonists:—who indifferently defend every error against truth, and every false religion against the only one which has come down from Heaven; who adopt, under their exalted protection, the impure superstitions of paganism, and the absurd doctrines of the Bonzas of Asia, and the sanguinary rites of our ancient Druids, and the extravagancies of the Bards, and even the stupid fanaticism of the followers of Mahomet; who tolerate every thing and approve of every thing except the worship and the doctrine of Jesus Christ; in whose eyes every thing is good, provided they banish from the people all fear of the judgments of God, and all hope of the future rewards of virtue. These are the teachers on the faith of whom you give the lie to all the generations who have gone before you; you retract the promises of your baptism, you abjure the Gospel, and bid defiance to all the thunders of Heaven. I entreat you to reflect upon the awful situation in which you are placed. If the Christian religion, the truth of which is not susceptible of the least doubt to any reasonable and sincere intellect—if that religion which has enlightened and reclaimed the world be not a fable, your damnation is inevitable. If man does not perish altogether like the brute—if there be a future state after death, it will be a miserable one for you. If there exists a God to punish infidelity, you will be the victim of His justice for all eternity. If there exists a hell, you will become its prey. All the hopes of good men must be vain; all the maxims upon which the wicked rely for security must be true; the most evident demonstrations must be illusions; there must be nothing in the government of this world but accident or caprice, if you can escape from unlimited and never-ending torments. Who, then,

ought to shudder—who ought to stop short with terror in his course, and reflect profoundly upon his state if you should not? Have you a moment to lose? Is it when death will suddenly present itself, that you shall have time to examine what you ought to believe? Is it in the midst of the horrors of your last illness, that you shall have the liberty of mind and the leisure necessary to study a doctrine which you had never known before? Is it then your doubts will be satisfied and your prejudices dissipated, as if by enchantment? Is it when your eyes are almost sealed in death that the truth which had been hitherto surrounded by so many thick clouds, will suddenly shine upon them with its purest light? Will you then pass in a moment from blasphemy to adoration, from contempt to reverence, from hatred to love, and from the audacious pride of infidelity to the humble simplicity of faith? Ah! my blood runs cold at the thought; but I say it through charity for you, and because there is yet time for your salvation. If you be enlightened then, perhaps, it will only be to fall into a dreadful despair—to pronounce the sentence of your condemnation with your dying breath, and like other infidels whom I myself have known, to see from your death-bed the glare of those flames into which you are about to be cast for ever. Oh! my dear friend, anticipate that fatal hour. From this day forward, enter into the consideration of your only essential interests, and consider whether there be any concern of more pressing necessity than to rest your faith upon points which will decide your lot for all eternity. This is what I have to say to the Christian who has lost the faith.

Let us now pass on to those who believe in the Christian religion, but do not observe its precepts—Christians in speculation, but pagans in practice—faithful in their words but corrupt in their hearts, and dissolute in their morals. The world is full of these men who profess to respect the Gospel as a divine book, to adore its author as the only Son of God, and who scruple not to commit all that the Gospel forbids, without observing any thing which it commands—who style themselves children of the Church, and audaciously violate all its laws—whose entire life is a series of the most astonishing contradictions. They know that the world is already judged and condemned; and yet they regulate all their actions by the maxims and practices of that world. They will tell you that the narrow way leads to heaven, that the multitude are hastening to their ruin, and, at the same time, they walk with security in the broad way, and congratulate themselves upon living like the rest of the crowd. They know the precept of plucking out the

eye, and of cutting off the arm which is the occasion of scandal, and yet they feel a pleasure in dwelling in the midst of scandals and occasions of sin. They hear the Apostle desiring them to refrain from the appearance of evil,* and they feel indignant when any one finds fault with lascivious dances, with immodest dresses, with impure exhibitions, with the most profane societies, with the most seductive books, with the lowest conversations, and the most suspected familiarities. They admit that ambition, pride, revenge, avarice, and voluptuousness are vices which their religion condemns, and, nevertheless, they sacrifice their conscience to the thirst of honours; they sacrifice every thing to their pride; they become murderers rather than overlook an insult; they make riches their idols, and plunge into the most disgraceful pleasures. They are not ignorant that certain meats are sometimes prohibited, and yet their tables are always covered with them. They hear an anathema denounced against those who do not comply with their paschal duties; and yet they are never seen to approach the altar. They know the day of the Lord, and yet they distinguish it in no respect from ordinary days. They deplore, with pathetic eloquence, the calamities which irreligion has caused—the morals of the people perverted; probity almost banished from the face of the earth; the most atrocious crimes multiplied to such an extent that they no longer excite the least surprise; every tie of duty either relaxed or broken; order and subordination becoming, as it were, impossible in every class of society; upon all subjects they speak as we do; and they add that our country is beyond the power of recovery, that all things will return to their original chaos, unless the people are led back to the worship of their fathers, unless they are taught to respect their pastors, and unless a restraint more powerful than human laws be not revived. Nothing can be better than such language; but see what their actions are. They seldom appear in the temples; and whenever they do, their demeanour in them is most indecorous. They show no respect to the ministers of Jesus Christ. They give their children, their servants, and neighbours examples of the most mortal indifference to religious observances, and of a habitual omission of the most sacred duties. If they are enemies of systematical infidelity, after having seen its disastrous effects, they are no less violently opposed to sincere piety, and true Christian virtue. They wish to practise nothing more than a certain worldly religion, a religion of mere decency, which consists in

* 1 *Thessal.* v. 22.

believing the mysteries of faith, in admiring the morality of the Gospel, and all the while, leading such a life as if there was no faith or no Gospel. What can be said to this class of persons, but that their guilt equals their folly, and that they offer almost as great an insult to the Almighty as the infidels themselves? for when the latter disobey Him they pretend to discredit the fact of His having spoken; but to admit that He commands, and to pay no regard to His divine ordinances—is not this an aggravated excess of insolence and contempt? Oh, if there be any one of you who sees that he is such as I have described—to him I would say: Enter this retreat; learn to tremble at the state of your soul. Ask yourself, in presence of Him who shall hereafter judge you, what advantage can you derive from a speculative and vain religion which can no more protect you from His wrath than it defends you from your passions—a religion in which you will be damned, and in which thousands have been damned before you? Does the worship of the supreme Master of the universe, and the service which is due to Him, consist in nothing more than a mere conventional language, and certain ceremonial observances? Does He not desire that we obey and fear Him, and be jealous of His glory? What does He care for the barren homage of your lips, if your heart is always far from Him, and if your whole life is an abomination to Him? If you violated His law in no more than one particular, His own words assure us that it would be sufficient to cause your eternal ruin. If you appeared at His tribunal with the stain of no more than a single mortal sin, your reprobation would be the penalty. What, then, must we think of that countless multitude of prevarications which form, as it were, the whole course of your days and years? Is it not time, at length, to apply a remedy to such dreadful calamities, to provide against such an urgent danger, and to adopt every possible precaution against eternal misery? For you, this is a subject fraught with the most serious reflection. I leave you to pursue that reflection, and I shall now address myself to those who more rationally join practice to their belief.

How happy should we not feel if all those whom we include in this latter class were altogether faithful, and delivered from the yoke of their passions. But alas! there are many of them who, though sincerely desirous of giving themselves up to Jesus Christ, are nevertheless, very weak in virtue—who expose themselves to the occasions of sins, and yield to them—who pass their lives in the sad alternations of penance and relapse—incessantly renewing resolutions which are violated as often as

they are formed—and with all the appearances of true contrition, deploring, in the presence of God, their grievous transgressions into which they had been betrayed by too violent and unmortified propensities. Oh! how painful is the conflict which these souls are obliged to sustain! how necessary it is for them to reflect more seriously upon their misery than they have done hitherto, and to impress the sentiments of faith more deeply upon their hearts, that by such means they may fortify themselves against a rebellious nature, burst asunder the galling chains of evil habit, and escape the dreadful danger of perishing for all eternity with their good intentions, and inefficient projects of sanctification. It is for persons of uncertain character, but of good dispositions, that a retreat may be a decisive means of salvation.

Finally, we have amongst us just men who seem to be confirmed in the practice of virtue: and they should not be forgotten upon the present occasion.

Listen to us in turn, most precious portion of the flock—precious souls, who form the consolation of the Church, and who, we hope, will be our crown and glory upon a future day—will you say that as you have chosen the part of virtue, you have, therefore, no need of entering deeply into your own hearts, and of meditating upon the judgments of the Saviour with a salutary dread? But did not the saints themselves work out their salvation with fear and trembling? Is there any state, is there any degree of perfection upon earth, where complete security can be found? As long as we are surrounded by the corruption and infirmity of the flesh will we not always have reason to distrust ourselves? Are we not always liable to be surprised by the artifices of the tempter, to be hurried onwards by the seduction of the world, to be led astray by the artifices of self-love, and to be overturned by the violence of our passions? Was it not to His most faithful disciples that Jesus Christ has said, *Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.** Was it not the holy King David—that man according to the heart of God—who, to walk with greater security, observed all his ways, kept the thoughts and desires of his soul continually before him, held his eyes always fixed upon the lessons and Divine precepts of faith, and often retired to watch like the solitary sparrow or the night raven, groaning and sighing in the presence of the Lord, to bring down mercy upon his own soul? That too confiding piety which imagines it is able to sustain itself in the midst of dangers without occa-

* *Matt.* xxvi. 41.

sionally seeking refuge in solitude, to be supported there with the thoughts of eternity, and to renew its strength by means of meditation and prayer, is led astray by illusion, and will ultimately degenerate and decay. Moreover, my dear brethren — I mean you whom we see engaged in the edifying observances of the duties which Christianity prescribes—do you know, at this very moment, when I address you, whether you are unworthy of love or hatred? Are you certain that your heart has not insensibly imbibed some secret poison of vanity, of self-esteem, of resentment, of aversion towards your neighbour, which corrupts your works in those eyes which penetrate the depths of the abyss? Will you have the temerity to assert that amongst these daily faults into which frailty hurries you, there have been none which made you lose the grace of God? Are you quite certain that in these detractions, in these ill-natured jests, in these rash judgments and suspicions, in these exhibitions of scorn and contempt, in these outbreaks of ill-temper, in these severe and sarcastic expressions, in these indiscreet curiosities, in this indolence and effeminacy of life, in these wanderings of the mind in prayer, in these phantoms of the imagination, there never has been anything but what is trifling, involuntary, and venial? Have you no reason to fear that the languor into which you have fallen does not bear a very close affinity to that fatal tepidity which provokes vomiting* and disgust on the part of God? Is not your very frequentation of the sacraments attended with its own peculiar danger? Have holy things been always treated with that sanctity which they deserved? and has the flesh of the Lamb without stain been always received into a heart prepared as it ought to be? Without pursuing the subject to greater length, what a subject have you not already for examination and reflection? Therefore I invite you also to retreat. Come, O ye just, come, O ye converted sinners, weigh your thoughts and actions, in the formidable balance of the sanctuary. Close your ears against the senseless discourses of creatures, and listen in silence to the voice of Him who judges justice itself, who often detects faults where men see nothing but virtues, and who alone can distinguish the pure gold from that which is only so in appearance. Perhaps He will now show you important reformations which must be wrought in a life that appears to us innocent and worthy of commendation. Perhaps He may open your eyes to see in your soul wounds which have hitherto escaped your notice, and which He will be pleased to

* *Apoc.* iii. 16.

heal at last. But, at all events, I venture to promise you that those days which you shall spend in His house shall not be days thrown away. He will visit you with the blessings of His sweetness: He will drop down the heavenly dew of His grace upon your parched and arid soul; He will fill your heart with His Divine light: He will console you in every trial, by making you feel deeply that time, and the miseries which end with it, are nothing, and that eternity contains unspeakable delights within its depths for those who bear the Saviour's yoke with fidelity and fervour.

You must therefore conclude, my dear friends, in whatever condition you are, that your chief concern, your most urgent want, is to reflect upon your eternal interests. I have shown you this. I shall add that you can have no more favourable opportunity to reflect upon them with profit than you have in the present retreat and jubilee.

II. In order that the mind of man, which is too often dissipated upon outward objects, immersed in all that affects the senses, and entirely occupied by the interests of time and of this perishable life, may be able to apply itself effectually to meditation upon the important concerns of faith, three things are necessary—interior recollection, which calls back the soul within herself; outward instruction, which supplies the subject of those serious reflections to which it ought to devote itself; and the assistance of a special grace which affects and enlightens her. Now these three things can never be so happily united as in the concurrence of this retreat and jubilee, which supply you with the most efficacious means of interior recollection, the kind of instruction which, of all others, is best calculated to elevate your thoughts to the consideration of eternal truths, and the assistance of graces which are not only abundant but even rare and extraordinary. I shall endeavour to make you sensible of the value of these three powerful helps which are afforded to you on the present occasion.

First—the present retreat and jubilee supply the most efficacious means of interior recollection.

When the prophet Jeremias, whose words you have already heard, so bitterly deplored the calamities which made the whole earth desolate, he ascribed them all to the want of recollection—to that fatal dissipation which carries away the majority of men far from themselves, and does not suffer them to enter into their own hearts, to hear the voice of God and of their own conscience. *Desolatione desolata est omnis terra, quia nullus est qui recogitet corde.* This is in reality the source of all our calamities, as it is the source of all our errors and trans-

gressions. God, who fills all creation with His immensity, to whom this whole world is a temple, but who feels a peculiar interest and delight in rational beings whom He has formed to His own image, has formed, as it were, an inward sanctuary in the bottom of our hearts; there He has established His throne and dwelling-place; and, as He sent forth His oracles of old to the Jewish people from the inmost recesses of the tabernacle where He resided amongst them, He communicates His light and His favours in like manner to us from the secret and profound sanctuary of our hearts where He vouchsafes to dwell. If we often enter there to converse with Him, we shall persevere in the love of virtue, in the feeling of our dignity, in the value of real goods, in the contempt of false glory and corruptible riches, in the detestation of vice, which degrades and defiles us. But, if we fly from His presence by banishing ourselves from this interior temple, to spread ourselves abroad amongst creatures—if we eagerly fill our minds with all the frivolous or dangerous objects which enter by the senses, we soon forget that we bear the impress of the Divine resemblance, that our souls are the offspring of the Most High, and companions of the Angels, that the body is our prison, the earth our place of exile, that heaven is our country, and death the bursting of our chains and the beginning of our new life. Instead of preserving such sublime ideas we confine all our desires and all our anxieties to our mortal existence; we lose sight of the great future which is prepared for us; we place all our happiness in the ravings of our passions and all our glory in our shame; we basely reduce ourselves to the level of the brute creation, and perhaps envy them their stupid instinct and those savage appetites which are uncontrolled by reason and conscience, and the privilege of perishing altogether in the corruption of the grave. When man has attained this degree of abjection there is no excess or disorder of which he is not capable; impiety, scandals, monstrous and abominable debauchery become his natural element. And this is precisely the desolation which excited the sorrow of Jeremias. The unhappy sinner whom dissipation has consigned to that abyss can never escape from it, if recollection does not lead him within himself to the feet of that God from whom he has wandered. Oh, the power, the admirable efficacy of retreat! One serious return to one's self has been more than once sufficient to convert a dissolute man or an immodest woman in one moment into models of true penitents and illustrious conquests of Divine grace. It is thus Magdalen, Pelagius, Augustine, and many others, whose cases are well known, were

converted and sanctified. What, then, must we not expect from a retreat which is nothing else than a public appeal, a solemn invitation to recollection? Who could avoid feeling himself disposed to enter into his own heart when he sees a whole population crowding often every day into the house of the Lord, and remaining there during whole hours prostrate in His presence, or attentive in listening to His word? Who could help being carried away from earthly thoughts and affections by the sight of the holy altars substituted for the vain exhibitions of the theatre, by the singing of sacred hymns instead of the soft harmony of profane concerts, by the religious silence and gravity of our assemblies, which are so different from the bustle and licentiousness of worldly assemblies, by the mere outward solemnity of our exercises, and the imposing thought of an entire week, consecrated to meditation upon eternity? Yes, I venture to assert that even if the most hardened sinner joined the multitude of the faithful who crowd this temple at the present holy season, he would feel at least some desire of conversion; he would envy the happiness of those whom he would not have the courage to imitate; and he would begin to comprehend how there is a thousand times more pleasure in piety and virtue than there is in all the poisoned pleasures of this world. And thus it is that this retreat supplies the most efficacious means of interior recollection.

Secondly—It affords the kind of instruction which of all others is best calculated to elevate your thoughts to the consideration of the truths of faith, and to impress them most vividly upon your souls.

We do not pretend to teach a different doctrine from that which is heard in every Christian pulpit; and we have not the enlightenment nor the eloquence of those who announce the Divine Word to you upon other occasions; but, my brethren, the language of retreat possesses a peculiar and exclusive efficacy, not only on account of the circumstances to which we have already referred, and which affect the imagination and move the heart, but also by the effect of a more apostolic character which is then attached to our ministry, as also by the nature of the subjects which we discuss, the order in which they are arranged, and, finally, by their order and continuity. In other courses of preaching, people are sometimes tempted to regard us not only as the ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and the distributors of that bread which nourishes the soul, but also, alas! as orators, whose natural gifts and talents they criticise, and appreciate according to their fancied merits.

They fancy themselves entitled to expect studied discourses from us, in which they expect to find art and ornaments, as well as feeling and solidity. But such is not the case, when we devote ourselves to more laborious functions—when we resolve to bear the burden and the heat of the day during the whole course of a retreat – when we sow the sacred seed of the word in the hearts of our hearers with the sweat of our brow;—we are then regarded in no other light except as labourers of the Gospel. In such cases it is felt that we regard only the spiritual fruit of our labour, and not the applause of our hearers; and it is a matter of no surprise that we should divest our language of all outward decoration, and that without suffering our minds to be occupied with the thought of pleasing or dazzling our hearers, we think of nothing else but to move their consciences, and make tears of repentance flow; and therefore, upon such occasions, we preach the Gospel with that energetic simplicity and apostolic freedom, which causes the speaker to be forgotten, and makes the sinner consider nothing except his crimes, and that God whom he has insulted, and the punishment which threatens him. We then treat on no subject except the greatest and the most profound truths of the Christian religion and morality; or we rather exhibit an abridgment of the whole course of morality and religion. We oblige man to look back to his very origin, in order to remind him the more forcibly that his soul is the breath of the Creator; that his body is but a mass of clay, which is shaped by His Divine hands. We point out to him the object and the end of his being, which is to glorify its Author, and, by serving Him, to merit a happiness without limits. We make him measure the brief course of life with a single glance, in order that he may comprehend that it is but an imperceptible point in time, as time is but an imperceptible point in eternity. We transport him in spirit to his death-bed, to prepare himself for that awful moment which shall decide his fate for all eternity. From thence we conduct him to that awful tribunal, where the decree which is once pronounced is irrevocable, and next to that other judgment, which shall put an end to this world—that judgment in which the secrets of hearts shall be made manifest in presence of the whole world. We go down with him to the very gates of hell, and we show him, in the midst of that fiery prison, the very spot which his sins has marked out for him. When he comes forth from this abode of terror, we lead him trembling to Calvary, where he beholds the Son of God becoming a Mediator between him and His enraged Father, suffering torments and death in order to save him,

shedding for him that pure and adorable blood which blots out all iniquities, and laying open the bosom of infinite mercy to redeem him. At such a spectacle, confidence revives in his heart; he begins to shed more tender tears; he mingles those tears with those of Magdalen and the Prodigal Son; and at length presumes to lift up his eyes to Heaven, and to contemplate that habitation of peace and happiness, which he may be able to reach at length by penance and the amendment of his life. Although any one of these great objects may not be sufficient, when considered by itself, to produce profound emotion, the combination and series of them altogether will be sure to produce it. The soul, transported far from this earth into the middle of the scenes of eternity—receiving, as it were, repeated assaults from all that is calculated to affect it—alternately agitated by fear, humbled by affliction, elevated by hope, and impelled by love—ultimately yields the victory, and thus becomes the happy conquest of our zeal. Such is the efficacy of the instructions of retreat.

However, we do not deceive ourselves, O Lord! We are very far from ascribing such wonderful effects to any language or exertions of our own; we do not forget that *neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth*,* but that Thou alone givest the increase; and that it belongs solely to Thy grace to bring to maturity the salutary seeds which we lay down in the soul. Therefore have I announced to you, my brethren, in the third place, that the circumstances under which you are assembled furnish you with the assistance of graces, which are not only abundant, but even rare and extraordinary.

If there were no other graces to be obtained at present except those which are attached to a retreat, they would be sufficient to justify what I advance; for does not a constant experience prove that God blesses these holy exercises, these pious societies of Christians, who suspend their accustomed employments and come often in the day into His house to place themselves at His feet, like Mary, in order to hear His voice and receive His divine lessons? How many just men, fortified in the ways of justice, and elevated to loftier degrees of virtue, how many feeble and wavering souls rescued on the point of a deplorable fall, how many faltering hearts revived and strengthened, how many converted sinners, paralytics of thirty years' illness, healed, testify that upon such occasions the dews of heaven stream upon the earth, and the Holy Spirit exercises

* 1 *Cor.* iii. 7.

a powerful influence upon the soul. Are not these the consoling results which sustain our courage and strength, which are so often ready to sink beneath the fatigues of this laborious ministry? And if I may compare these retreats with the far more laborious and extensive enterprises of a more generous and elevated zeal, what other recompense do you enjoy for your immense labours, your truly apostolic labours, whose missions, already so justly celebrated, revive amongst us all the miracles of the first preaching of the Gospel.* What is it that renews your strength, which is so often exhausted whilst you travel with unwearied zeal through cities and country places to preach penance and to plant the cross of Jesus Christ in every place? Is it not the consolation of beholding, wherever your footsteps lead, injuries repaired, enmities extinguished, public morality reformed, the pure sentiments of faith and religion revived in hearts that had been withered by vice and infidelity, and whole countries returning, striking their breasts and shedding tears of compunction at the almost forgotten worship of their fathers? Is it not the hope of saving your native land more effectually than armies could have done, of restoring to the bloom of youth the old age of a nation which a far different apostleship had led to a hideous moral decrepitude, and of averting far from us those awful maledictions which so many crimes had gathered upon our heads? If such be the graces of a mission, those of a retreat, although inferior, are, nevertheless, similar: and we have never yet seen them unprofitable. But, upon the present occasion, other graces of a more rare description are combined with these. This plenary indulgence, in the form of a jubilee, which is granted by the supreme pontiff, to those who, during the days of the present octave, will bear a part in this Church, in the devotion which we practise to the cross—this complete remission of sins, this total abolition of the most formidable of all debts which is promised to true penitents—these extraordinary faculties conferred upon priests, in virtue of which they have power to absolve, even from cases which are generally reserved for the Holy See, to remove excommunications and censures, to commute vows, and thus to exercise an almost unlimited power of loosing consciences which, at every other period, is far more restricted in their hands: do not all these justify us in asserting that this is the period of the greatest mercies

* The priests of the mission, founded by St. Vincent of Paul—a society whose wonderful success in the limited sphere to which their exertions have been confined in this country, makes their further extension most desirable.

of the Lord, and that you would be very ungrateful and very blind if you did not eagerly hasten to avail yourselves of it?

Alas! have we not abused His Divine patience, and provoked His wrath, and despised His favours long enough already? Oh! my dear friends, how has it come to pass that we, whose fathers have been so religious and so faithful, that we who inhabit a land so fertile in saints and martyrs, should have, all on a sudden, become the enemies of a God to whom this country was so long indebted for so much prosperity and greatness! Have we not learned clearly enough from those misfortunes which have crushed us ever since we begun to wage war against Him, that His protection is preferable to His hatred, and that there is more wisdom in bowing down beneath His yoke than in bidding defiance to His thunders? Oh! who will give us—I will not say public glory and happiness, good repute among strangers, and peace and tranquillity amongst ourselves; but who will give each individual amongst us peace of soul, unalloyed and real happiness in the present life, and the hope of a blissful future in the life to come, if we are not reconciled at length with heaven?

Come, then, O ye all who do not wish to perish for all eternity—come to your God, who calls you both by my voice and by that of your own conscience. Reject not His urgent invitations nor His friendship which He now offers you, perhaps, for the last time. Come, O you aged, who, though already bowed down to the grave, have not yet, perhaps begun to live well, nor even learned to prepare yourselves for dying well. Come, O you who, now in the vigour of youth, think of nothing else but enterprises, projects, and family establishments, although that God, whom you forget, is, perhaps, about to demand your soul at this very moment. Come, blind and licentious young men, who have made trial of so many pleasures, and could find no happiness in them all, who, through your impatient desire of self-gratification, have prematurely fallen into satiety and disgust; come and make trial of another kind of pleasure which shall be new to you—the pleasure of innocence and virtue. It is that alone can add new vigour to a heart that has been wasted and worn by your passions, and make it experience true delights. Come, you dissipated and frivolous women, whose minds have been hitherto occupied with nothing but trifles, who know no concerns of greater importance than your dresses and amusements, and aspire to no higher rewards than the commendation and applause of a foolish world; come, and be convinced that the only great and solid

goods are those which you have never reflected upon, and deplore the considerable portion of your life which has been already wasted upon vanity. Come, great sinners! whose crimes are already multiplied beyond the hairs of your head, and whom the despair of salvation had cast into the abyss of infidelity; come, and learn by your own experience, and prove by your example to other sinners as desperate as yourselves, that the Divine mercies infinitely surpass all the malice of man, and that the charity of Christ is an asylum at all times open to repentance. Come you also, who have been long engaged in the service of the Lord; come to be instructed, consoled, and strengthened at His feet, to receive new fruits of grace and new gifts of love. In a word, Christians of every age, of every sex, of every condition, whoever you be, and whatever life you have led, come, hasten to the source of heavenly grace and benediction that you may be purified, that the desires of your hearts may be satisfied, that you may be worthy of the favour of your God and His immortal recompense. *Amen.*

CHARITY SERMONS.

SERMON ON CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF THE "MISSIONS ETRANGERES" AT PARIS, DURING THE LENT OF 1819, IN SUPPORT OF THE POOR.

"For, so is the will of God, that by doing well, you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."—1 *Peter* ii. 15.

CHRISTIANITY had no sooner begun to exist than it was obliged to contend with the malignity of the world; and ignorance, prejudice, and hatred assailed it with the most odious and unjust imputations. To teach the faithful how they ought to meet those new assaults, and to defend the calumniated religion, was the special duty of the Prince of the Apostles. He allows them neither resentment nor vengeance against their blind detractors; he forbids them to resist oppression, or to revolt against persecuting princes or magistrates; he is unwilling that they should have recourse to human eloquence, or employ arguments and discourses to justify a doctrine which had come down from heaven. In his opinion, there was only one sort of defence which seemed consistent with its dignity; this was the sanctity and innocence of those who professed it—that they should afford the example of every virtue; that they should apply themselves with perseverance to the practice of good works; that they should do good to all, even to their enemies, even to the enemies of their faith;—and this seemed to him a sufficient means whereby Christianity may be vindicated, imposture confounded, and the God of the Gospel glorified, and all His designs accomplished to their full extent. *Sic est voluntas Dei, ut benefacientes obmutescere faciatis imprudentium hominum ignorantiam.*

And, in fact, it was the modesty, the mildness, the patience of the primitive Christians, the angelic purity of their morals,

their inviolable fidelity to all their engagements—but, above all, it was their universal benevolence—the sacred profusion of their alms, their tender compassion, their active charity towards all the unfortunate—that triumphed at length over the prejudices of an idolatrous world, disarmed its fury, changed its contempt into respect, its aversion into love, and made adoration succeed to blasphemy. Monuments of every kind testify that during the three first centuries, when persecution was so incessant and so violent, the virtues of the disciples of Jesus Christ excited the astonishment and the despair of those whose thirst for blood could not be appeased, and who endeavoured to exterminate them by every means in their power. Their praises may be found recorded even in the histories which were composed by their enemies—even in the writings of the very magistrates who sent them without mercy to the scaffold. The force of conscience often compelled the executioners who tortured them to fall prostrate before them, and the judge who was ready to sign their death warrant to descend from the judgment-seat, and the spectators who had crowded with shouts of applause at their punishment, to proclaim their innocence aloud. The admission was extorted from all who saw them, that they were, in every respect, above reproach, and that their only crime was their refusal to adore idols.

But, to return to their love of the neighbour, and to confine ourselves to the consideration of this virtue, could any one refrain from being filled with admiration at beholding them not only sacrificing themselves for each other's sake, but even exposing themselves to danger for the sake of those very pagans, and bestowing the most generous care upon them, at the risk of their own lives, in those mortal contagions which forced their friends and relatives to abandon them? Is not this the true heroism of benevolence, and that humanity which philosophy boasts of, but which religion alone can practise—that benevolence whose name is found in almost every page of the writings of our self-styled sages, but whose reality exists amongst the humble disciples of the cross alone? The wisdom of this world pretends to have gained a superiority over the Gospel in this respect—because it has had the audacity to exempt man from every duty which he owes to God: and reducing every other obligation, so as to comprise them all in the single obligation of benevolence, it says to man in its sententious and arrogant tone—"Do good to thy fellow-men, and thou hast fulfilled all justice." It fancies itself to have given new efficacy to that only precept by the abolition of all the others, and to have rendered a signal service to mankind, by

including the whole code of morality within that solitary precept.

It is that assumption I shall endeavour to refute this day, by showing that the true love of the neighbour can have no other foundation for its support, and no other principle for its guidance, except the love of God: that to weaken the latter is to aim a deadly blow at the former; that the tendency of every infidel doctrine is to contract and harden the heart instead of expanding it, and making it sympathize with want or sorrow; that, in one word, the only benevolence which is worthy of the name is Christian benevolence—first, because every other benevolence is narrow and contracted, whilst Christian benevolence is alone universal in its influence, and boundless in its object; and, secondly, because every other benevolence is most generally speculative and sterile, whilst Christian benevolence is alone efficacious in its motives, and abundant in its effects.

May the Divine Spirit—the spirit of charity itself—fill me this day with His light and fervour, that I may clearly point out to you the only source of the true love of the neighbour, and that I may, at the same time, inflame you with its sacred fires! This is a grace which we shall all unite in asking through the intercession of Mary. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I. It is impossible that a benevolence which is merely philosophical and human, could be universal in its influence and object; in proof of which, two manifest and striking arguments may be deduced from the most simple and obvious considerations which philosophy itself suggests. For, in the first place, a virtue which is merely human can spring from no other principle except the reason or the sensibility of man; but the mind and heart of man are essentially limited, and consequently incapable of producing an universal and unlimited effect; and therefore an universal benevolence must of necessity have some other source. In the second place, a benevolence which is merely human is nothing more than a natural feeling of the human heart; but this sentiment must encounter in the same heart a host of other natural sentiments—such as self-love, avarice, jealousy, vindictiveness, pride, antipathy, disgust, and many others which it would be tedious to enumerate—and all of these restrain its influence and limit its operations. Hence it is that men who follow the mere dictates of nature—whether they be philosophers or not, so far from being endowed with universal and unrestricted benevolence towards their fellow-men, are, on the contrary, incapable of concealing their aversion and hatred for those

whose humour, and views, and interests, and, as it often happens, whose mere opinions are incompatible with their own, and still more so for those who offend or injure them or treat them as enemies; because a virtue which is merely natural and human is unable to triumph, by means of its own strength, over every human passion and every inclination of nature, so as to enthrone itself alone over their ruins, and, as it were, to occupy the whole extent of that place from which it had dislodged them. Accordingly, no benevolence can be universal unless it contains some intrinsic principle which is infinite and unrestrained, and which is, moreover, superior to all the natural feelings of the human heart, and capable of subjecting every one of those feelings to its control.

Let us now inquire whether such a principle exists any where except in religion; and whether there be any other except divine charity, which, by the very fact that it is divine, must therefore be infinite, and must, therefore, be also powerful enough to subjugate the human heart, and to bring every affection of that heart in complete subjection to it. The charity, or love of God, exalts the creature above its own level, enlarges and expands its capability of loving, imparts to it the sentiments of the perfect and immense Being which it loves, makes it regard all men as His children, as His images, as the objects of His most tender affection. When they are viewed in this light, it makes him love them all, and inspires him with an ardent and sincere desire of doing good to all men without exception, whether they be citizens or aliens, acquaintances or strangers, virtuous or wicked, friends or enemies. Let no one persuade himself that such a disposition is an inconsiderable or even a merely human perfection; it is the height of virtue, the loftiest summit to which Divine grace is capable of elevating a mortal heart; and Jesus Christ gives us sufficient reason to believe this when He says—*Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect**—clearly intimating thereby that, in order to be faithful in this particular, we should aspire to nothing less than the sanctity of God Himself. And, indeed, what sacrifices must we not make—to how great an extent must we not have conquered, and, as it were, destroyed nature with all its frailties and repugnances within our hearts—in order to bring ourselves to bestow our affection upon what we naturally dislike—to love even the forbidding defects, or the odious vices which are naturally insupportable to us—to cherish the rival who disgraces or supplants us, the envious man who

* *Matt.* v. 48.

hates us, the perfidious man who betrays us? What a still greater effort must we not make when we retrench our own enjoyments, in order to give what we withhold from ourselves to those who are regardless of us—to those whom we know not—to those who are ungrateful—perhaps to our very enemies? But what an amazing prodigy it is to hazard, and to sacrifice fortune, reputation, repose, and even life itself, if necessary, in order to relieve unfortunate creatures from whom we expect no return, to whom we are united by no tie save the common fellowship of all mankind? Whence then could such benevolence be derived except from the bosom of that God whose goodness is infinite, or from the heart of His only Son, whom He has sent upon earth to make men partakers of His love? And yet senseless men will presume to tell us that to inspire a narrow-minded and imperfect being, whom so many conflicting passions agitate, whom so many clashing interests separate from his fellow-men, with a benevolence so expansive, so sublime, so much superior to nature, so violently opposed to his own inclinations, nothing else is required but to sever the ties which bind him to the Author of all perfection, of all mercy, of all love; that nothing else is required in order to make him more humane and compassionate but to deprive him of that glorious gift of charity—that *bond of perfection** which unites the minds and hearts of men in harmonious unison—that abundant source of generous actions and heroic sacrifices—and to abandon him, with no protection except philosophical phrases, to the mercy of his self-love, his inclinations, and his caprice.

Now, I appeal to you who are always applauding the energies of nature—I will not ask you whether the practice of this universal benevolence of which we speak, has ever been found except in Christianity—but has even the most faint idea of it been ever found elsewhere? Many philosophers had appeared upon earth during the space of four thousand years, when our Divine Legislator came at length to teach His heavenly doctrine; and yet, after so many ages, He announces the law of love, which He proclaims, as *a new commandment. Mandatum novum do vobis ut diligatis invicem.*† To show still more distinctly that it is His own work and that He glories in being its Author—He styles it His own precept. *Hoc est præceptum meum.*‡ Has He been deceived, or has He been disposed to claim an honour which is not due to Him? Ah, Christians! although His word ought to be sufficient—although it would

* *Coloss.* iii. 14. † *John* xiii. 34. ‡ *Ibid.* xv. 12.

be blasphemy to impute falsehood to the Sovereign Truth, or error to Supreme Wisdom—let us, nevertheless, venture to examine; let us investigate facts, let us hear the evidence, and pronounce our judgment upon this momentous cause.

It is true that no people, no legislator, no sage of paganism has been acquainted with this chief foundation of morality and humanity—this right which man possesses in virtue of his condition as man, to the commiseration, and love, and assistance of his fellow-men? But do we stand in need of any lengthened discussion respecting this point? Are not all the histories, all the books, all the monuments of antiquity most explicit in their revelations? Whilst the Roman people applauded in their theatres this elevated sentiment of one of their poets—"I am a man, and nothing which interests humanity is inconsistent with my interests," do we not know what their principles of humanity were with regard to foreign nations, which they styled barbarians—claiming to themselves the right of enslaving, oppressing, and exterminating them at their will—disregarding the liberty or the life of any who were not either Roman citizens or their municipal or allied subjects?—towards their prisoners of war, whom they massacred without mercy—dragging conquered kings and captive queens, and their unfortunate children, loaded with chains to the capitol, where they slaughtered them as if they were the meanest animals?—towards the numerous classes of slaves, whom they seemed not to regard as men, and whom their avaricious or cruel masters could starve, or torture, or crucify, according as caprice or interest suggested?—towards the gladiators—the unfortunate victims of the most atrocious of all pleasures—whom they compelled to slay each other in the arena, upon festival days, for the amusement of the spectators?—towards children newly-born, whom their fathers had full power to stifle in the cradle, if they wished to spare themselves the trouble of their support, and who daily perished in thousands in this manner, and yet no law protected them, no compassion was excited in their favour, and not even one individual manifested his aversion for so many murders? towards the poor, to relieve whom the rich not only never concerned themselves, but whom they oppressed with enormous usuries, consuming even their final resource; and when despair alone was left them in the end, selling the unfortunate debtors themselves, in order to gain the accumulated interest and principal of their homicidal loans by means of this infamous traffic?

Such were the habits of a people who were the wisest as well as the most celebrated in pagan antiquity. The Greeks were

not more humane; and the detail of their practices would present a terrible picture. The other nations whose governments were not so well regulated, for the most part were still more cruel and ferocious. And it is well worthy of remark, that such cruelties, and others still more revolting, which I pass by in silence, through respect for the feelings of my hearers, were not regarded as excesses or even as abuses. They were established customs—practices which were common to the heads of the state and the multitude—to those who were applauded for their virtues as well as those who were decried for their vices—practices sanctioned by legislation, approved by philosophy, and consecrated by religion itself. The gods of paganism, which were nothing else but devils, demanded human victims in sacrifice; their oracles enjoined the commission of murder; their temples were defiled with the blood of human victims; and their festivals were scenes of either prostitution or slaughter. The gravest of their philosophers, and, in particular, he who has been deservedly preferred to all others, on account of the sublimity of his genius, and who seemed to merit the appellation of the divine, formed these detestable customs into rules and precepts, and made them the elements of government and morality. They coolly asserted in their works that, in order to rid the state of a useless burden, such children as nature had refused to endow with strength or beauty should be exposed; and that the aged and infirm, who could no longer afford any assistance to the republic, should be abandoned and left to perish. An entire sect of these false sages—one of the most celebrated, and one which prided itself most upon perfection and virtue, so far from inculcating compassion towards the miserable, condemned it as a weakness; made fortitude of soul consist in contemplating the last extremities of human misery without emotion; and taught, for the consolation of the unfortunate, that suffering and sorrow are no calamities. Moreover, it was a doctrine universally received amongst them that vengeance and hatred alone were due to the enemies of each individual's person or family. To pursue them obstinately, and to injure them at all hazards was lawful and often meritorious in the estimation of these masters of wisdom. Where, then, was that universal benevolence which we seek among them? Reckon, if you can, the exceptions and restrictions which were put to the great duty of loving and doing good to the neighbour.

Come forward now, O Christian charity! to teach mankind that they are all brothers; to overturn the barriers which divide nation from nation, and one class of society from

another, and one child of God from another child of the same common Father; to extinguish resentment and hostility; to banish from the heart the leaven of hatred and jealousy; to subdue pride; to restrain the spirit of avarice; to confine selfishness and self-interest within due limits; to expand the soul; to make the whole human race one family, of which every individual man is a member, and a God-made man the head.

The time has come at length. *The goodness of God our Saviour appeared.** He hath been made manifest in our flesh. What a change is suddenly effected? New ties unite the hearts of all; laws are purified from their atrocities; the manners of states and individuals are civilized; wherever the Gospel extends its benign influence, human sacrifices, the bloody amusements of the amphitheatre, and many other monstrous habits disappear; the least affectionate father would recoil with horror from the thought of consigning to death the child who received existence from him—that child who is much more the child of God than of himself, and who is destined to become a citizen of heaven; man becomes a sacred being in the eyes of his fellow-man; the slave is no longer the sport of his master's caprice, nor the prey of his wantonness or avarice, nor the victim of his cruelty; he is his inferior in the order of society, his fellow-man by nature, his equal in the sight of God; he has a right to the regard, the care, and the affection of him to whom he owes obedience and fidelity; and religion softens the rigour of slavery, whilst, in the mean time, she strives to abolish it altogether. Nations that had become Christian, cease to regard each other as beings of different races, of unlike origin, and belonging to deities at variance with each other; they look upon each other as various branches of the same family, as the posterity of a common father, as the handywork of the same Creator, whose providence protects them and whose supreme law governs them all. The law of nations—a law which had been previously unknown—is established upon this foundation; and the mutual relations between one nation and another, and between one sovereign and another are instituted, and their mutual claims are arranged, and their disputes are terminated in compliance with the principles of natural equity. The terrible law of war assumes a character of moderation, of equity, and even of gentleness; armies engage in combat without a hatred of each other; victory puts an end to further bloodshed; the contending parties, after having laid

* *Titus* iii. 4.

down their arms, embrace each other like brothers; the prisoner confides in the generosity of the conqueror who honours his valour and treats him as a friend; a conquered people is no more reduced to slavery; neither shall it have reason to fear that it may be exterminated by the sword, or be loaded with chains and led into captivity far away from its fields laid waste, and its cities reduced to ashes.

What has produced those happy effects? The charity of our Divine Redeemer, and those words that have issued from His sacred lips—*These things I command you that you love one another.** This commandment not only regards those who were borne in the same womb, whom the same country united under its laws, whom an identity of disposition and habit or other natural relations united: it embraces men of every condition, of every rank, of every country, without a single exception. Jesus Christ has clearly explained this. His words are—*If you love them that love you:† if you salute your brethren only: what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this?*§

If you wish, my dear friends, to contemplate a striking instance of the power of this injunction at the very beginning of Christianity, consider what was effected in St. Paul. You are aware that previous to his conversion he was an ardent enthusiast of the sect of the Pharisees, that he regarded no friend except those of his own party or tribe; and that he furiously persecuted all who refused to follow the traditions of his fathers. But hear him after he has been overturned upon the road to Damascus; and when he became a disciple of Jesus of Nazareth; how his heart is enlarged. "There is no longer," he says, "any distinction of Jew or Gentile, of circumcised or uncircumcised, of Greek or barbarian, or Scythian, of bondman or of free, but Jesus Christ who is all in all.‖ I am a debtor for His love, not to one people in particular, nor to any single sect, but to all people whether savage or civilized, to all men whether learned or unlearned, whether wise or unwise.¶ The charity of Christ presseth me. I bear within my bosom all that has been ransomed by His blood; I would willingly shed mine for the most unknown inhabitant of the remotest region in the world. Free as I was, I have made myself the slave of all. I travel over the whole earth to serve my fellow-men, weeping with those that weep, rejoicing with those that rejoice,

* *John* xv. 17.
† *Matt.* v. 46.
‡ *Ibid.* 47.
§ *Ibid.* 46, 47.
‖ *Coloss.* iii. 11.
¶ *Rom.* i. 14.

suffering hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, extreme fatigue, and the most cruel persecutions without repining, forgetting myself and making myself all things to all men, to unite all in the sweet law of the God of mercy and love." This is also the language of all the Apostles. Their actions far exceed their words; and, after them thousands of apostolic men, following their footsteps, depart from their home and country, traversing seas and vast deserts, and seeking the very ends of the earth in search of ignorant and savage people, to carry to them the science of morality and the light of the Gospel, along with agriculture and the arts, as well as civilization itself; making men who were more ferocious than tigers and lions, become gentle and submissive; and, frequently falling victims to a zeal and benevolence, of which it is unnecessary to assert that it would be useless to look for examples anywhere else except amongst Christians. It is therefore religion, which has created true citizens of the world, and not a false philosophy, which, by forming imaginary citizens of the world, has merely taught its disciples to be no longer citizens of their own country.

But if Christian benevolence extends its care to the stranger, and the barbarian, will there not be, in our well-regulated societies, some class of the unfortunate, so vile and abject as to be despised, and so obscure as to escape its attention? Will the just man feel himself bound to feed the mendicant who wanders about without a shelter, or seek amid the dark retreats where the poor who are ashamed to beg, conceal themselves? Will he not be allowed to abandon the unfortunate to their sad destiny, when God Himself seems to refuse them the care of His providence? Ah! the poor! who is ignorant of the affectionate solicitude of the Church in their behalf! The widow and the orphan, the aged man without support, and the miserable being clothed in rags, are objects not only of her compassion and love, but even of her respect and veneration. It is she has taught kings and princes to wash the feet of the poor; she has always been a nurse and a mother to them; as long as she possessed treasures she bestowed them liberally to relieve them; for their relief she erected magnificent hospitals which an anti-Christian philosophy has not altogether destroyed; she instituted whole orders of religious, of both sexes, to serve them, to relieve their necessities, to attend them in their illness, to console them in their affliction. If she endeavoured to abolish mendicity, it was not by severe laws, but by abundant relief; she never silenced the unfortunate, who begged for bread, except by liberal alms; and even at the present day,

whilst she is herself poor and needy, she solicits, at least, public compassion on behalf of her suffering children, she laments, she gives expression to the grief that has pierced her maternal heart: she employs every means of authority and persuasion; and from her pulpits she never ceases to threaten the rich who are avaricious and insensible, and to invite those who are liberal and compassionate to new efforts, and new sacrifices in the cause of charity. She would forget all her humiliations, and all her losses, if the unhappy were relieved; and like her Divine spouse, she will regard any service which had been done to the least amongst them as if it were done to herself.* It is thus the Gospel makes a duty of compassion and liberality towards the poor—that class which was so much neglected and despised amongst the pagans.

But how universal soever the precept of evangelical benevolence may be, might we not, at least, except our enemies? No, my brethren. It is here we recognise thoughts which are different from those of man, and a will which is far different from that of which the feeble heart of man is capable of its own efforts. Speak, O Divine Legislator, who hast come down from heaven. *But I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them them that persecute and calumniate you.*† Speak, O Paul, worthy interpreter of the lessons of such a Master. *If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink. . . . Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good.*‡ This law which our religion imposes is so sublime, that it not only has never occurred to the mind of any philosopher, but it is scarce understood by the majority of Christians themselves. Of this latter fact we have daily proof; for many believe they can excuse their aversions, their ill-nature, their animosities, by saying—"He is my declared enemy; he has sworn a merciless hatred against me; he has blackened my reputation; and he lets no opportunity escape of injuring me." So highly elevated is this command above all human comprehension—*Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; bless them that curse you, and pray for them that calumniate you.*§ Yet, this is a rigorous obligation, and no salvation can be obtained by him who fails to fulfil it—because, to exclude a single man from our love is to exclude ourselves from the love of God, and to renounce the perfection and the promises of the Christian faith.

* *Matt.* xxv. 40. † *Ibid.* v. 44. ‡ *Rom.* xii. 21. § *Luke* vi. 27, 28.

But, must we also love the enemies of God and man—every infidel, every wretch, and every murderer? Triumph, oh, divine charity! Yes, my brethren. Undoubtedly, we must detest their errors and vices, but we must love their persons; we must pardon them; we must implore the forgiveness of Heaven on their behalf; we must wish them good, and perform it. It is thus, according to the words of our Saviour Himself, we shall show that we are children worthy of our Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and pours down upon the just and the unjust the rains which fertilize their fields. See also whether religion abandons the criminal who is pursued and stricken down by human justice. Who descends along with him into the dark depths of his dungeon? Who strives to procure him consolation in his misfortune? Who alleviates his anguish, calms his gloomy rage, and opens again, by repentance, a way to hope? Who sits beside him when he is dragged to the scaffold? Who ascends it along with him? Who gives him the last embrace, and addresses him words of consolation at the very moment when he expires? Is it not the minister of Jesus Christ! Is not the priest the last and the only friend he leaves on earth?

Such is the universality of Christian benevolence, which embraces all mankind, and admits no restriction or limits. It is a participation in the infinite goodness of God which is peculiar to the only true religion, and which forms one of the most glorious characteristics of His Divinity. Describe, if you wish, this religion which is so merciful and so friendly to mankind, as anti social and intolerant; treat it as a barbarous and sanguinary fanactism; Thou hast been pleased, O great God! to defend her by facts, and to vindicate her cause by the very triumph of her enemies. She has reigned in our country fourteen hundred years; and everything has prospered and increased under her auspicious influence; she appeared thirty years ago surrounded by many institutions, useful to humanity, which could only be attributed to herself, and which are the glorious monuments of her ancient power which she has left behind her. Infidelity has reigned in its turn, after having promised so many favours; and what have we beheld? Surrounded with ruins, weary of bloodshed, and terrified at the disorder into which it had plunged the state, and a great portion of the world, it has been soon compelled to call back that religion which it proscribed, and to invoke her assistance in order to prevent the total annihilation of society.

Having now proved that Christian benevolence is alone universal in its object, it remains to be shown that it is alone efficacious in its motives.

II. True benevolence supposes sacrifices. Man is worthy of being styled the benefactor of his fellow-men, when he imposes privations upon himself to assist them, when he diminishes his own enjoyments, to augment their resources, and consents to suffer a diminution in his wealth, in order that their miseries may be diminished: but he has a peculiarly surpassing claim to that title when he reduces himself to want, when he devotes himself to painful labours, when he exposes himself to serious danger, when he gives his very life for his brethren—a devotedness of which we find many instances in the history of Christianity. But to shut up within the hearts of the poor only a small portion of our superfluous wealth, and merely as much as may be useless to ourselves, to retrench none of our superfluities, to be unwilling to endure the smallest sacrifice, or to sustain the most trifling risk, for the neighbour's sake—this is not benevolence: at best, it is the absence of inhumanity and cruelty. Therefore, as true benevolence costs some sacrifice to nature, man requires some motives to induce him to practise it: and these motives must be strong enough to overcome his inordinate attachment to his possessions, his luxury, his pleasures, or himself. Let us now consider what those powerful motives are, which philosophy proposes to produce such an effect.

The first motive which is alleged is personal interest. But how could personal interest supply such a motive? I have always supposed that it was the most deadly enemy to benevolence; I have always heard that it produced, not only insensibility to the wants of others, but injustice, fraud, usurpation, rapine, and even murder; I could never believe it to be capable of suggesting a generous action. I do not mean to assert that a person may not bestow a favour in the hope of receiving another in turn; for the contrary is notorious; but that is not benevolence, it is rather avarice; surely that paltry traffic by which a man speculates upon the services which he renders, and the favours which he confers, cannot be dignified with the name of virtue. But you will say that there is another kind of personal interest which, owing to certain combinations arises from the secret connexion of the individual interests of each with the public welfare. Ah! this is a principle of a more complicated and profound character. But you must admit that every individual must have rather a subtle perception to understand his own interest in this point of view; and

that no philosophy has ever yet been found to understand its own upon such a principle. I suspect that many ages must elapse, and that many books must be written, before a man, who is actuated by the principle of self-interest alone, will learn to divest himself of what he possesses, and bestow it upon the poor, through the hope of receiving compensation for his share out of the general prosperity which shall be the result of his liberality. Let us abandon those reveries and childish imaginations. The Gospel does not entrust the poor man's destiny to the personal interest of the rich man, but to the charity of the faithful; and disinterestedness is the essential attribute of charity. *Charitas non quærit quæ sua sunt.** So far from wishing that when any one does good to others he should reckon upon the benefit which may be derived from such service, the Divine Legislator of charity gave this sublime injunction:—*When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy neighbours who are rich, lest, perhaps, they also invite thee again, and a recompense be made to thee; but when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind; and thou shalt be blessed, because they have not wherewith to make thee recompense.*† Oh, how far is human benevolence elevated above every sordid calculation of self-interest, how disinterested and noble are its views! And what most particularly deserves our admiration is, that such gratuitous mercy has been invariably practised, and has been, at all times, common throughout the Church. In the first ages of Christianity, the faithful sold all they possessed, and laid the price of them at the feet of the Apostles, to be divided amongst their brethren; in the following ages we behold an innumerable multitude of the wealthy divesting themselves of their riches, and making themselves poorer than those whose distresses they relieved; and even at the present day, in this unfortunate age, when virtues are so rare, that charity which accomplishes wonders, which makes every sacrifice seem trifling when the miserable are to be relieved, may still be found amongst pious souls. But what can be the motives of such amazing generosity? Is there really no interest to influence the Christian? There is, my brethren; it is not a present and grovelling interest, but one that is sublime and eternal. He is well aware that by sowing earthly goods he will reap heavenly treasures; that alms-giving blots out sin, and makes God more propitious, and opens the gates of His

* "Charity seeketh not her own."—1 *Cor.* xiii. 5.
† *Luke* xiv. 12-14.

kingdom; that whilst the rich man who employed his wealth badly is cast, after his death, into devouring flames, the beneficent rich man is received by the friends whom his liberality has created, into the abode of peace and never-ending felicity. This is a motive somewhat more efficacious than abstract reasonings on the benefit which each individual may derive from procuring the general welfare by the sacrifices which he makes himself.

The second motive proposed by philosophy is, the glory which is attached to good actions. What! will it never propose any views but such as are mean and unworthy of a virtuous man? What is this glory but a vapour which the wise man despises? What name does the love of this glory merit but that of vanity? And yet, when a man performs a work of charity because he knows that the names of the contributors will be published and posted up to view, you dignify his action with the title of benevolence, and you imagine that he is entitled to your esteem. But, not only does such a motive make the action which emanates from it contemptible in itself; its efficacy must also necessarily be of a very limited character. The greater part of mankind will always prefer their own wealth to a vain reputation of liberality; and, indeed, they are perfectly right; for, after all, how despicable soever money may be in itself, the advantages which it procures are somewhat more valuable than the empty sound of applause; and, moreover, if such an allurement were at all effective, it would only be so with respect to public and remarkable actions; but what would be the fate of secret miseries, which are always the most affecting and interesting of any? Who would relieve those virtuous but unfortunate families who feel the want of all the necessaries of life, but are ashamed to acknowledge them, and who cannot be rescued from despair, except by those favours of charity which are most tender and discreet, as well as the most generous and attentive? O, Gospel of Christ! sacred and Divine law! you need not awaken pride in order to inspire compassion for distress. I open your blessed page, and there I read—*Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth, that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.** I do not hesitate to affirm, my brethren, that the man who, from a mere comparison of this passage with all that eloquence and philan-

* *Matt.* vi. 1, 3, 4.

thropy have dictated to the most famous moralists, would not recognise the superiority of the language of God over that of feeble and arrogant human wisdom, ought to be regarded, either as a senseless being, or one altogether struck with supernatural blindness. And, accordingly, how many hidden benefits, how many secret acts of generosity, how many heroic acts of virtue, which are at present unknown to the world, but which will be revealed upon a future day before the face of heaven and earth, have been, in every age, the result of those few simple, but impressive words! Thanks to their efficacy, how many bitter tears have been wiped away! how many deep wounds have been healed! how many hearts that were crushed by affliction have been consoled! how many wretched beings, who were on the eve of breathing their last sigh, or, perhaps, in their despair about to inflict death upon themselves, have been restored to life and hope by those mortal Angels whose unobtrusive charity performed its work in silence, with no other witness but God alone! And as they speak of glory, is not that true glory which remains shut up in the bottom of a feeling and virtuous heart, and is preserved there unalloyed and unimpaired, until it shall please the Lord to make it manifest upon the great day, and to form it into a crown of unfading glory which He Himself shall place upon the heads of the worthy imitators of His own benevolence?

If those two former motives which have been furnished by the wisdom of this world, are so feeble and imperfect in comparison with those which religion presents, what can be said respecting the third—the pleasure which is felt in doing good? Certainly, my brethren, we shall not deny that this is a real pleasure; nor that it is one of the most noble feelings of the human heart; nor that souls who are naturally good cannot be spontaneously susceptible of it. We have known some who were bountiful by inclination, and, as it were, by instinct; and we have seen them brought to Christian piety by such happy dispositions. But, in the first place, all men have not inherited this precious sensibility. There are some who have not received it from nature; amongst others it has been extinguished by voluptuousness, avarice, ambition, by the cares of life, or, perhaps, still more by violent and vindictive passions; after so many wars, and so much discord, good-natured affection, and tender commiseration for our fellow-man, are of peculiarly rare occurrence in our days. Familiarity with the aspect of misery has contributed to increase this fatal obduracy of heart. There are but few who enjoy the unalloyed pleasure which is felt in relieving the distresses of others; and when the heart is blunted

to this feeling, philosophical declamations will not endue it with a sensibility which it had not before. Religion is alone able to rescue it from this mortal lethargy, and to bind it by its promises and threats to the performance of generous actions, which had lost their attraction for it; or rather the intrinsic power which it possesses can subdue the hardest hearts, and create new feelings within the bosom of man, and awaken that sensibility which had slumbered, and make the love of the neighbour grow up along with the love of God, from which it springs. But, in the second place, does the pleasure which certain men—who are naturally the friends of their fellow-men—experience in conferring favours, ever, of itself, induce them to endure great sacrifices, or to perform extraordinary acts of humanity? Are any of them to be found who, under the influence of this inclination of nature, renounce the indulgences of luxury, the sumptuousness of their entertainments, or the magnificence of their equipages, to relieve the wants of the poor, in times of public calamity and distress? Are there any of them who tear themselves away from the indulgences of an easy and voluptuous life, to bring relief to the sick, and consolation to the dying, in the hospitals, or to lighten the chains of the unfortunate who pine in the dungeons? Compare all the most affecting and heroic actions which have ever been the result of the boasted pleasure of making men happy with the works of a Vincent of Paul, a John of God, a Charles Borromeo, a Belzunce, or of a thousand other heroes of charity whose names I could mention, and you must admit that religion has a power far superior to that of nature in producing miracles of devotedness and benevolence.

It remains for us to investigate the last motive which philosophy suggests. It is asserted that it inspires a profound consciousness of the dignity of human nature, which must prevent man from suffering his fellow-man to remain in abjection and misery. My brethren, if this philosophy to which they refer be the philosophy of infidelity, I feel myself obliged to deny that it has ever inspired the least respect for the dignity of human nature. On the contrary, there is nothing more calculated to humble and degrade man; for, by disputing the spirituality of his soul and the immortality of his existence, it makes him regard himself to be nothing more than a body of clay which becomes a prey to putrefaction and worms, and which obliges him to debase himself below the level of the brute creation. These were the detestable doctrines which, in the days of paganism, made man so contemptible in the eyes of his fellow-man, and produced those savage excesses, to which

we have already referred. These are the doctrines which have again arisen in our days, and made our generation so lavish in human blood, and crushed the first buds of tender and generous feelings in the souls of many. What interest could any one possibly feel in the disorder or breaking up of a machine which had been organised by chance, and which, of necesity, must soon fall again to pieces and be consigned for evermore to annihilation? If you would conceive a truly sublime idea of the dignity of our nature, listen to religion. She will say to you, "All this visible world has been created for man, and man has been created for God alone. His soul, that pure and immaterial substance, is the very breath and the living image of the Creator; it is endowed with intelligence, to contemplate the perfections of the Infinite Being, and, with a free will, to love Him; it is united to the body, so that by such a union even matter and clay may be made capable of serving and glorifying the Author of all things. The soul shall never die; the body had become liable to death from the effects of sin; but it will arise from its ashes by the effect of a victory which has been gained over sin and death by Jesus Christ at His resurrection." She will then add, "This poor man whom you behold, clothed in squalid rags and covered with ulcers, is the work of the Most High as well as you -created to His image like you—destined to reign along with Him for all eternity as well as you. He is more the object of God's tenderness than you; His Providence recommends him to your care and commands you to provide for his wants, and expressly assures you that you shall never enter His kingdom if the poor do not lay open the way before you. And this is not all. The Son of God has established the poor as His representatives upon earth; He wishes that they should be recognized as coming in His person; and that when viewed in this light they should be honoured, respected, and loved, and no effort spared to alleviate their calamities; so that when He shall come to judge the living and the dead, He will not say to the reprobate rich, "Depart from me into everlasting fire, because you have not fed and clothed the unfortunate who were like yourselves;" but He will say, *Depart from me you cursed! for I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat, and I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink, I was a stranger and you took me not in, naked and you covered Me not, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.** And the Gospel continues that at these words they shall all exclaim, *Lord! when did we see Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or*

* *Matt* xxv. 48.

*sick, or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?** Then the Sovereign Judge will make answer—and Oh! great God! why are not these words ever present to the minds of those who so readily close their ears against the prayers of the poor!—*Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me.*† *Amen, dico vobis quamdiu non fecistis uni de minoribus his nec mihi fecistis.* Whatever you have refused to the least or most abject of these unfortunate and abandoned creatures you have refused to Myself. Say now whether religion or philosophy more effectually raises the dignity of man, in the state of abjection to which misery has reduced him, and which of them supplies more urgent motives to relieve that misery.

But your actions, my brethren, and not our discourses, will more effectually demonstrate whether Christian charity possesses a real superiority over natural benevolence and worldly sensibility. In a few moments you will have an opportunity either of contradicting or confirming, practically, all that I have advanced! for now, when we have so highly elevated the effects of the mercy of the Gospel, if an assembly of the faithful, after being solicited by their minister, in the temple of Jesus Christ, to relieve the necessities of the poor, are found to be ungenerous in their donations, will it not be a very natural inference that those flattering panegyrics which have been bestowed upon the efficaciousness of Christian morality, are mere barren declamations, and that we who are the heralds of truth feel no concern here except to amuse you by a vain sound of words? Oh! we entreat you, my brethren, to honour your religion, which is so cruelly calumniated at the present day—your religion, on which, alas! all the hopes of the state, as well as of the Church, are at this moment fixed. I shall conclude by addressing you in the words of my text. Bear in mind that God himself expects from you that by your good works you may vindicate the glory of His name, and silence the slanders of those foolish men who dare to blaspheme what they are completely ignorant of. *Sic est voluntas Dei ut benefacientes obmutescere faciatis imprudentium hominum ignorantium. Amen.*

* *Matt.* xxv. 44. † *Ibid.* 45.

SERMON ON THE OBLIGATION OF ALMS-GIVING.

PREACHED AT SAINT GERMAIN-L'ANXERRE, IN SUPPORT OF AN ORPHAN ASYLUM.

"Give alms."—*Luke* xi. 41.

When our Divine Saviour, during His mortal life, fulfilled the duties of a ministry of benevolence and love throughout Judea, the necessitous of every kind found a certain refuge in His person. Wherever He appeared, the unfortunate of every class crowded around Him and received consolation in all their afflictions. At one time He feeds a hungry multitude in the desert; at another time He heals the lepers, the paralytics, and the blind. At one time He takes feeble children in His arms to honour them with His Divine caresses, and, by giving them His blessing, to afford them a pledge of every good gift; at another time He receives a sinful woman when she repents, and wipes away her tears, or saves an adulteress from death, or fills the soul of an expiring thief with hope and joy. Thus, every step He trod was marked by the graces and favours which He never ceased to diffuse around Him. *Pertransiit benefaciendo.**

Such, my dear brethren, is the affecting and adorable model which we have the consolation of seeing you imitate. We summon you into our temples, and make you pass in review, as it were, all the miseries and infirmities which are incidental to human nature. We present to you the poor, the infirm, the aged, who cannot live without your assistance—that immense multitude of unfortunate children who wander about through this great city without any other resource but Divine Providence and your charity—those young prisoners who have returned from their evil ways, and after having experienced the mercy of God and of public justice, are now in need of your mercy also—those penitent Magdalens whom your liberality ought to strengthen in the paths of honour and virtue upon which religion has made them enter. At the voice of the ministers of religion your compassion has proved itself generous and bountiful; the alms which your hands have poured forth in abundance have supported the indigent, brought consolation to the infirm, broken the chains of the captives, or made their pressure less galling, supported infancy, re animated sinking old age, encouraged repentance, given prosperity to

* *Acts* x. 38.

religious establishments, which will do honour to religion, and extend its salutary influence. Even the most distant Churches experience the effects of your solicitude; and your gifts are at this very moment crossing the ocean to draw down blessings on your name in the new world. The number of your good works, so far from fatiguing your zeal, has only increased its ardour; and your liberality always seems inexhaustible when our discourses and our strength are almost completely exhausted.

Nevertheless, we hope to find words this day also to recommend to your pious liberality an object which is perhaps better calculated than any other to interest your hearts. That object is innocence, poverty, and misfortune, combined in the most feeble sex and the most tender age—youthful orphans, assembled together by charity, rescued from the depths of the most abject misery, and from the midst of every danger—adopted by new mothers, to whom they owe much more than existence—upright morals, a wise and Christian education, enlightened piety, and honest industry, which is the source of prosperity and the safeguard of modesty. It is with your aid they will continue to enjoy these precious advantages; it is by your liberality their number, which is at present so limited, promises to increase, and this growing institution can expect to flourish. I shall, therefore advocate the cause of these children, although I am well aware that their weakness, their wants, and your own tender feelings will plead it far more eloquently. I shall treat of what you can practise so well—of alms-giving; I shall treat of it, not as a flatterer who commends you for what you do, but as a minister of God who points out how far you are obliged to do it; for alms-giving is not a work of supererogation or a simple counsel, but it is a precept and a duty; and this is the important truth which I shall endeavour to explain in the present discourse. I shall endeavour to advocate it with no less prudence and moderation than zeal, but also without reserve, as the poor do not hear me. I shall first establish the indispensable obligation of alms-giving, and point out its limits; and secondly, I shall refute the objections and pretexts with which the infidelity and avarice of the present age encounters this obligation. May the Lord enlighten my mind, and give persuasion to my words, that I may enable you to know, and above all, that I may induce you to love the most delightful of all the obligations of the Christian religion—that of consoling indigence and misfortune! *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—Amid the almost universal forgetfulness to which the maxims of Christian morality and the true principles of the

natural law are consigned at the present day, it is very probable, my brethren, that if I questioned one of the good men of the world who are still regarded as religious and exact, respecting the obligation of alms-giving, he would employ very nearly the following language: "It is very well for a man to be charitable, but he is obliged only to be just. To do good to the unfortunate renders a man worthy of commendation and reward; but to do no injury is sufficient to exempt him from censure. As I am forbidden to take away what belongs to another, I am in like manner allowed to do what I please with my own. If I employ a portion of it for the relief of the unfortunate, it is because I have a tender heart, and I wish to bring down upon me the blessings of the poor: but in this I feel myself pursuing a generous impulse, and not fulfilling a precept; and I set whatever limits I please to my compassion and liberality. Therefore man can presume to use the words of God Himself; 'I show mercy to whomsoever I please, or I refuse it according to my pleasure, and I am responsible to myself alone for the liberality which I employ.'" *Miserebor cui voluero, et clemens ero in quem mihi placuerit.**

Listen to the words in which the great St. Basil refutes this doctrine: "They are your goods," exclaims this Father, "and you therefore, dispose of them according to your pleasure. They are yours I admit, but from whence and from whom have you received them? Have you brought them into the world at your birth? If you say you have obtained them from chance, you are an infidel; if you admit that they are a gift of the Creator's goodness, what has been His object in giving you what He has refused to so many others? Has He merely followed an unjust and blind caprice in this unequal division of those things which are necessary for subsistence? But there can be no doubt of His justice or wisdom; is it not evident that you are rich, and that others are poor only that you may practice charity, and that they may practise patience; that they are indebted to your bounty for their subsistence; and that you owe your salvation to their prayers?"

And how could we justify the providence of God, my friends, if He had given wealth to some, and misery to others, without obliging those who have all things in abundance to relieve the necessities of those who are in want of everything? Are not all men the work of His hands? are not they all formed alike according to His image? are not they all brethren? are not they all descended from one common father, forming

* *Exod.* xxxiii. 9.

one great family of which the human race is composed, and called to possess the same inheritance? And shall some enjoy every happiness, and others suffer every privation here below? Shall some possess enough to satisfy not only their wants but their caprice, their passions, and the avidity of the most unrestrained desires, whilst others shall enjoy neither food, nor clothes, nor shelter? And shall these fortunate elder brothers, the only objects of the Creator's care and condescension, be under no obligations to their unfortunate brethren who are thus abandoned by Heaven and earth to all the misery of their lot? I ask, you, would not such a plan for the government of the universe contain something monstrous and revolting, if it could be attributed to Divine Providence for a single moment? If it were a mother to the human race, and a step-mother to all the rest, how could we defend it against the reproaches of those whom such an odious partiality would excite to blasphemy? How worthy of that Providence is it, on the contrary, to have chosen certain men to be the depositaries of His treasures, and to bestow them upon the multitude of fellow-men! and as it has formed men of superior intellect to be, as it were, the light of ordinary minds, and strong and courageous men to be the refuge and support of the weak and fearful, to have also raised up rich men to be the benefactors, the stewards, and the defenders of the poor.

Oh! you who possess the gifts of fortune, or rather the gifts of your Heavenly Father, on you it depends to make His adorable Providence be blessed and honoured, or accursed and reviled. If you be faithful stewards of the goods which have been confided to you, your benevolence will furnish a pledge, and, as it were, a living proof of His wisdom and goodness; it will be seen that sufficient provision has been made for the wants of the miserable by raising you above them for their relief; and as that Providence is daily praised for having placed those bounteous luminaries which diffuse light and heat through the heavens, and adorned them with so much brightness, and for having raised to the clouds the summits of those mountains which send forth inexhaustible springs to irrigate and fertilize the plains, so shall it be also blessed for having endowed you with greatness, dignity, and opulence, for the consolation and happiness of all mankind. But if you devote to your own exclusive enjoyment that wealth which has been given you to be the means of the common prosperity—if you concentrate all within yourselves, or your own individual families, and forget that great family of which you ought to be the ornament and support, it would be the same as if the

sun retained his light within himself, as if the lofty mountains contained within their sides the waters which should fertilize the earth; the whole world would imagine itself abandoned by its Author; the most numerous portion of mankind, deprived of every hope of the alleviation of their distress, would deservedly complain of having been consigned beyond recovery to a misery without limits.

If we lived in those happier days when faith and piety afforded such powerful consolations to misfortune—when respect for the Divine Majesty silenced rash arguments, and suppressed audacious murmurs—when a recompense for all the afflictions, and a reward for all the passing injustice of this life was found in the hopes of eternity, and the expectation of a judgment to come– there was less reason to fear that indigence would lead despair and blasphemy to follow in its train, and that the poor, when abandoned, would reproach God Himself with the neglect and obduracy of the rich; but in these days of blindness and rage, when infidelity has spread through every class of society, and gained possession of a rude and ignorant populace—when atheism crawls about more hideous in its rags, there is scarce a miserable being who has not the temerity to impute his wickedness to God; there is scarce an affliction which does not become a source of rage and black despair; and it is impossible to tell how many blasphemers and hearts embittered against Heaven are contained in our prisons and receptacles of wretched beggary at the present day?

And, oh! avaricious rich man! do you believe that a God who loves His creatures, and who wishes to be loved by them, shall regard your insensibility with indifference, when that insensibility causes Him to be hated and calumniated by the poor? Will you ask me what law enjoins such a duty? Ah! that law is written in your heart, where God, when He formed it, has fixed that tender compassion which always resists avarice in behalf of suffering humanity. That law is written in your reason, which tells you that to be unwilling to deprive yourself of any pleasure when your fellow-creatures are dying in anguish and the want of the necessaries of life, is to be a barbarian, and unworthy of existence. That law is written in the universally-admitted principle of natural equity, that we must treat our neighbour as we wish to be treated ourselves, and that we must render that favour which we wish to be rendered to ourselves if we were in the same state of distress with him. That law is the law of every country and every time. It was admitted by that holy man Job, who,

although more ancient than Moses, and a stranger to the race of Abraham, and living in the midst of the gentiles, nevertheless declared: *If I have denied to the poor what they desired, and have made the eyes of the widow wait: if I have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have despised him that was perishing for want of clothing, and the poor man that hath no covering; if his sides have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, who would grant me a hearer that the Almighty may hear my desire?** What grace could I expect before the tribunal of Him who has formed the poor and the wealthy out of the same clay, and who shall judge us all alike? That law may be read in every page of the Scriptures. Imperfect and hardened as the people of the old law have been, yet mercy was a sacred precept in their eyes. "Let there not be amongst you," saith the Lord to the Jewish people, "a single poor or beggar in want of relief or shelter." *Non sit inter vos egenus et mendicus apud vos.*† If one of your brethren happens to fall into distress, harden not your heart against him, but open your hand to relieve him liberally. *Non obdurabis cor tuum nec contrahes manum sed aperies eam.*‡ "Lend to the needy in his indigence, but if he is not able to restore it, let the debt be remitted in the seventh year, and let your loan be converted into a gift." *Septimo anno facies remissionem.*§ And it is only on such conditions that the blessings of Heaven were promised to the selfish and carnal people. *Ut benedicat tibi Dominus in omni tempore.*‖

But what shall we say to the new people and the Law of the Gospel which is altogether a code of charity—which, as it were, almost exclusively enjoins mercy, and reprobates hardness of heart towards the miserable? Contemplate the wicked rich man cast into hell for no other crime than his inhumanity to the sufferings of Lazarus. Listen to the sentence of every merciless rich man pronounced in anticipation by the lips of our Saviour: *Depart from Me you accursed into everlasting fire!* And why? *For I was hungry and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me not to drink; I was a stranger and you took Me not in; naked and you covered Me not; sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.*¶ For whatever you have refused to the least of these unfortunate beings who were the objects of so much disdain and of so much cruel forgetfulness,

* *Job* xxxi. 16, 20, 35.
† *Deut.* xv. 4.
‡ *Ibid.* 7, 8.
§ *Ibid.* 1.
‖ *Ibid.* 10.
¶ *Matt.* xxv. 41-43.

you have also refused to Me; and when I punish you for them, I punish you for My own injuries. *Discedite in ignem æternam.* How important must not that precept be, when the violation of it is punished with eternal torments?

There cannot be the least doubt, then, respecting the obligation of alms-giving. But what is the extent of that duty? This second question is no less important than the first.

My brethren, let us beware of all exaggeration in this particular; let us not dwell upon beautiful maxims which are no rules, nor upon bright examples which no one is obliged to follow; let us not speak of those glorious days of the primitive Church when the faithful of Jerusalem had all their goods in common—or when those of Corinth reduced themselves to indigence, in order to relieve the poor—when every one felt anxious to purchase an eternal inheritance by the sacrifice of his earthly possessions; without proposing such sublime models for your imitation, let us confine ourselves to examine how far you are obliged by the law of alms-giving? how much you are bound to bestow upon the poor? To this question the fathers and doctors of the Church reply that you are bound to share your superfluities with them, because, as St. Augustine remarks, the superfluities of the rich are the necessaries of the poor. "*Superflua divitum necessaria pauperum sunt.*"

What are your superfluities but what you possess over and above what is necessary for you? Do not exclaim, my brethren, against this doctrine, which may appear at first sight to be somewhat extravagant; but consider it attentively, and you will find it to possess a wisdom and a moderation worthy of the Church your mother, and of the Holy Spirit who guides and directs her.

We admit that there is a three-fold necessity for every individual—what is necessary for existence—what is necessary for one's condition—and what is necessary for one's convenience. By what is necessary for existence we mean, as every one perceives at first sight, what is sufficient for the wants of nature, and is almost the same for all mankind. What is necessary for one's condition varies with birth, rank, and fortune; it is what one could retrench without lowering himself below his dignity or rank in life; and good order requires that every one should maintain his place in human society. Under what is necessary for one's convenience is comprehended all that is required by the just and lawful decencies which Christian prudence allows and respects. Whatever exceeds this three-fold necessity is the superfluity of which Jesus Christ demands

at least a part, for the relief of His suffering members. It is the fund which His Providence has destined for them. "*Superflua divitum necessaria pauperum sunt.*"

After this explanation, which is perhaps too encouraging, each of you may say, in the bottom of his heart, "I have no superfluities, for my possessions are scarcely sufficient for the wants of my family, and the strict conveniences of my rank in life."

Oh! my brethren—oh! you who are rich and great in this world, allow me to transport myself by thought into your houses, which are palaces, and to consider attentively all that is presented to my view. When I enter, I behold magnificent equipages, a long train of domestics, a pomp and splendour of which I am tempted to believe that a part retrenched for the benefit of the poor would not make you lose any part of that consideration which you enjoy. I then enter those halls which are so magnificently adorned, those sumptuous apartments in which you dwell; I am struck by the beauty and richness of the furniture; I admire the master-pieces of art and industry, the rare and curious objects which taste and variety have collected at enormous cost; and I am tempted to say within myself, "Alas! how many poor who are now dying, would return to life if one of these precious objects, which are nothing more than useless ornaments, were offered as a sacrifice to charity!" I see your table laid; it is covered with sumptuous meats and the most exquisite wines;—alas! I do not mean to dispute with you about what you style the conveniences of your rank, nor to present to you the austere rules of Christian frugality, moderation, and humility; without inquiring how far this magnificence which dazzles me is lawful for you, I content myself with asking you, in the presence of God, whether there is nothing superfluous in all this—whether there is nothing which may be retrenched for the support of those who are in want of the real necessaries of life, and even of food itself? Upon the reply which your conscience shall suggest I reckon upon this first superfluity which I term the superfluity of your luxury.

Let us pass on to another, which is the superfluity of your pleasures. Observe, I pray you, how I disarm the severity of my ministry to-day, and how many reproaches I am disposed to spare you. I do not ask you whether your pleasures are not frequently crimes—whether the dances and exhibitions with which you are so delighted, are not a part of those pomps of Satan which you have renounced in baptism—whether your gaming is not an excess and a disorder—whether your dresses,

O, worldly ladies! are not too often nudities and scandals? I do not ask whether you shall dare hereafter, at the tribunal of Him who has said, "Woe to you that laugh"—woe to you that find your consolation in this world, to exhibit the amusements of gaming, and the theatre, your vain fashions and dresses, not only as lawful but as necessary expenses—as indispensable duties and conveniencies of your rank in life? But, addressing your hearts, I would say to you, "What! you would not sacrifice one of these amusements to save a desolate family from despair! you would not retrench an ornament which sets off a beauty that must soon fade, to dry the tears of the desolate widow and orphan! Ah! if you will not renounce frivolous pleasures, learn at least to find some superfluity for the unfortunate."

There is a third which may be styled the superfluity of your negligence. Who could calculate, my dear friends, all that is wasted and lost in great and wealthy establishments? Who can estimate your indifference, your neglect, that proud recklessness which makes a portion of your greatness consist in your very carelessness and contempt for your own concerns—which leaves everything at the mercy of dishonest managers and avaricious servants, and all those whom it may please to surprise and deceive you? What is to be seen around you but profusion and disorder? The very fragments of your tables which are thrown to mean animals, or flung away to rot, or the refuse of your clothes which rust and moths consume, would afford a whole year's subsistence to a distressed family. In fact there would be no poor at all if they could only obtain all that the careless rich allow to be wasted, without enjoyment to themselves or advantage to anyone else. You are not allowed to suffer the superfluity of your fortunes, which are the support and treasure of the poor, to be wasted thus. "*Superflua divitum necessaria pauperum sunt.* Although you are the proprietors of your goods, in the eyes of man, you are only the managers and stewards of them in the eyes of God, who will require a rigorous account of their administration, and perhaps reproach you with the death of more than one poor creature, whose means of support was in your hands, and who, through your fault, stood in need of the very necessaries of life.

There is also another superfluity, which may be styled that of your avarice and ambition; for, if some recklessly squander the poor man's portion, there are others who, with avaricious care, store it up in their coffers, and convert it into a treasure of iniquity, which they amass from year to year with sordid parsimony, and disgraceful usury. Here, also, I shall not assail

that saving, whose excess is an insult to Providence, or even that usury whose express condemnation in the Gospel it would be so easy to point out. But, you at least, who thus store up for a future day, which perhaps you shall never see, tell me not that you have no superfluities for the distressed. What is that gold which is accumulated and multiplied in your hands, but the superabundance of your revenues, and the overplus of your wants? And when you have an abundance and superabundance for yourself, have you nothing for the naked and hungry man, who entreats you to satisfy the want which presses upon him? Have you nothing for that Lazarus, who is wasted by misery, at your door?

But where is the need of so many arguments, and such lengthened details. Let us see whether there be even one amongst you who will not find that he possesses some superfluity. I know your devotion to your country's welfare; and I will suppose, for a moment, that in some perilous emergency she required the aid of your voluntary gifts; I will, moreover, suppose that you were required to retrench nothing from the necessaries of life, or the real conveniencies of your state of life, and that your superfluities were alone demanded for your country's safety, would you say, my brethren, that you had no superfluity, and consequently, that you had nothing to offer in this great public emergency? Ah! I venture to affirm that not one of you would harbour the thought for a moment—that even now, when you have heard my supposition, every one of you has rapidly glanced over his fortune, and computed how much he could deduct from a useless expenditure, and estimated the sacrifice which he could make without doing an injury to his own interests, or interfering with that three-fold necessity to which we have referred. Such, then, is the superfluity which we seek. My dear friends, what your country does not require—because, thanks be to heaven, the danger which we suppose is merely imaginary—is now demanded by God Himself. He asks, at least, a part for your unfortunate brethren, who are His creatures as well as you are, and for whom His Providence has provided your charity as the only means of their relief. What right have you to deprive them of it.

It remains for me to refute the objections and pretexts which the infidelity and avarice of the age advance in opposition of this duty.

II. The philosophy of the present age, which has made such wonderful discoveries—which has been the first to teach this world that religion is useless to morality, and injurious to society—that Christianity, the law of peace and love, is a

violent and dangerous fanaticism—that interest and pleasure are the rule of duty, and the motive which impels to virtuous actions—has also revealed to us another secret—that alms-giving is an abuse, a scandal, and the true cause of public misery. I will repeat its assertions, and you will recognize them at once. "It is alms-giving cripples industry, and commerce, and the arts, by encouraging laziness and vagrancy, and, by the idleness which it indulges, leads many to guilt, whom a laborious life would have preserved in virtue." It adds, moreover, that "True benevolence does not consist in the charity of the great and wealthy, but in their luxury, which, by its profusion, causes gold to circulate through all the veins of the social state, bears abundance amongst the lowest classes of the population, and banishes vice along with mendicity and indigence."

How beautiful it is, my brethren, to hear such maxims from the lips of wealthy and dissolute men, who are, at the same time, eagerly desirous of money, and of every sort of enjoyment, who hold forth their excesses, their debauchery, their expensive caprices, and their very avarice and usury, as their good works, and as so many signal services which they render to mankind. Speak to them of some unfortunate man who is dying with want, and who implores their compassion, or of one of these poor of Jesus Christ whom the Gospel commands us to assist as we would assist Jesus Christ Himself, and they will tell you that he is an idle vagabond; that to assist such wretches is to make one's self an accomplice in a ruinous vice; and that if the law did its duty every one who asked alms should be put in irons. Endeavour to make them compassionate the lot of so many of the infirm, the aged, and the dying, who are crowded together in the hospitals, where they are sometimes in want of everything, or of so many abandoned families who conceal their humiliation, their misery, and their tears, in frightful hiding-places, and they will tell you that if persons are still to be found in distress, it is because there is not enough of luxury; and that the remedy of all their calamities is to be found in the multiplication of great fortunes which may increase the general prosperity, by pomp and enormous expenses, and insensibly diminish the poverty of individuals without giving anyone the disagreeable trouble of visiting or relieving so many of the indigent.

Oh! barbarous language, oh! fatal consequence of these detestable doctrines which, by substituting falsehood for truth, in every department, have disordered even the first notions of things. Thus, cupidity and selfishness will be benevolence.

Lucullus, and not Vincent of Paul, is the real friend of mankind. Luxury, that destructive poison which corrupts everything in the state—which enervates the habits, and hardens the heart—which dries up the true springs of public prosperity, to enrich frivolous and seductive arts, and every vile and dangerous profession—which substitutes an insatiable thirst of gold, and a foolish emulation of magnificence for every noble and generous feeling—which, ever urging expenses beyond the means of each individual, confounds every rank and condition, and produces frauds, scandalous failures, the ruin of the most opulent families, and the desolation of the poor—that luxury which the pagans themselves looked upon as the source of all vices, and to which they attributed the fall of the most flourishing empire, will henceforth be the great means of the happiness of mankind, the remedy of every disorder, and the resource of every misery.

But, O great God! if we were not even able to appeal to the unanimous opinion of all ages, and experience of every generation, is not all that is passing before our eyes sufficient to instruct us? When has luxury been carried to a greater extent than in our day? and when has there been more misery and crime, more miserable beings reduced by the deprivation of all things, and by the refusal of all aid, to the most dreadful excess of despair? Ask those generations who have gone before you whether they have ever heard of an unfortunate being abandoned to such a degree, as to have fallen by his own hand, in the extremity of want, and the frenzy of his anguish? And are not these catastrophes, which were formerly unheard of, so common at the present day, that they no longer cause the least emotion or surprise? Ah! our fathers were Christians; they felt that they murdered the poor man whom they had not relieved; they never learned in the Gospel that the profuseness of a vain luxury could discharge the debt of charity. It taught them, on the contrary, to observe simplicity of manners, frugality, and moderation; they were liberal in their alms, and frugal in everything besides; and indigence found a patrimony and an unfailing support in their superfluities. But ever since a proud and sensual philosophy has usurped the place of Christianity, the poor have been dispossessed, and all their rights disowned. Our philanthropy forbids them to appear before our eyes, or to utter a murmur, lest we may be annoyed by the sight of them, and by the cries of their misery, whilst we labour for their happiness by our luxury and pleasure. We calumniate them in order to exempt ourselves from the obligation of relieving them, and provide

prisons as their asylum, despair as their consolation, and suicide as their final resource. It is thus the present generation has abolished mendicity.

These reproaches, my brethren, are not directed against you. I am well aware that I now address a Christian congregation, and that you detest these barbarous theories. But I feel myself no less obliged, on that account, to assail them in this pulpit, and to expose them to the indignation which they deserve. We shall now proceed to other objections which are less revolting, which you yourselves occasionally advance against the duty of alms-giving, and which ought not to be overlooked upon the present occasion.

"The reverses of fortune," say some of you, "have reduced my circumstances so much, that I would rather endeavour to recruit my shattered fortunes, than to relieve the wants of others. Before I sustained such losses, I felt a pleasure in bestowing liberally, but at present I must make charity yield to prudence." To this I answer, my brethren,—"If the losses to which you allude are so great, that you have but little left beyond the necessaries and the reasonable conveniences of your state, give that little with a good heart, and you shall have fulfilled the precept—*If thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little*;* for you are bound to practise mercy only in the proportion to your means; *according to your ability be merciful*.† But if what is still left may be called opulence, although it is much less than what you have once possessed, oh! I implore you, do not, through a blind desire of being reinstated in your former splendour, withhold the portion of the wretched, and bring down the malediction of Heaven upon your heads. Why should not a small share of wealth content you, if it be still sufficient? If you have preserved a fair proportion of your property, after that immense shipwreck in which the fortunes of so many others have been swallowed up, to whom are you indebted but to that Providence who requires, that the debt of gratitude which you owe Him should be paid to Him in the person of the poor? Beware, my dear friend, lest He may withdraw His favours if you be found deficient; for God, as well as your country, possesses rights which He does not forego; and as the diminution of your property does not exempt you from the payment of that tribute which is imposed by the state, in like manner you are not exempted from paying to the needy the tribute which has been imposed by God Himself. It is, therefore, an indispensable obligation

* *Tob.* iv. 9. † *Ibid.* 8.

that your favours should be proportioned to your present abundance. *If you have little, bestow willingly a little.*

Will you allege the pressure of the times, the excessive and ever increasing price of the necessaries of life, and the danger of your reducing yourself to disastrous extremities, by your efforts to relieve others? Ah! my brethren; this excessive dearness of all the necessaries of life, this severity of the times, was the very motive which I was about to propose in order to make you increase your alms. For whom are the times so oppressive? For whom is this dearness a calamity and a scourge? Is it not for the poor man who is unable to purchase the bread to feed him, or the clothes which may cover his nakedness; and not for you who continue to live beneath gilded ceilings, and to live at a table sumptuously served up, and who have yet abated nothing in your equipages, your dresses, and your most evident superfluities? You must confess, that it is the excess of timidity to fear distress in the midst of so much opulence and splendour. Besides, what is required of you? and why need you feel alarmed? Do but retrench one of these banquets to which you invite friends, who are equally wealthy with yourself, who are parasites, perhaps, and a hundred poor men will be supported and satisfied. Let each of you lay down here to-day, in the treasury of mercy, as much as a single party of pleasure costs, and these fifty orphans, whom Providence recommends to you, will be abundantly provided with all necessaries for a whole year. O, my God! why are the fears of men so easily excited at the expense of charity, which are really so moderate, whilst so little alarm is felt at those of vanity, which are immense, and which swallow up the most brilliant fortunes day after day?

But you will say—"We are not sufficient for the good works by which we are overwhelmed; we are only a small number; the greater number of the wealthy of this world have disowned the sacred duty of alms-giving, when they have abandoned religion; and what can all our efforts accomplish for the relief of so much misery?" Oh, weakness! oh, cowardice! Good works oppress you! Tell me, I pray you, who has ever been impoverished by such holy liberality? They oppress you! But I assure you that they support fortunes, that they protect your family, that they preserve the state, that they draw down upon you the unexpected favours of Heaven. You stand alone in the practice of charity! Oh, if that be the case, my brethren, how enviable is your lot! You, therefore, are the only objects of the love of God, the only heirs to His kingdom, the only safeguard which prevents His wrath from bursting upon

us, and which saves the world from destruction; for when charity shall have grown cold throughout the world, the end of time shall have come, and the world will be consigned to destruction. You stand alone in the practice of charity! With what magnificence should you not practise it, to supply that void which has been left by so many hard-hearted rich men, and if possible to fill up the abyss of so many wants! But, do we reproach you with being avaricious in your gifts? No, my brethren; for otherwise, we should contradict our own words. We said, at the very beginning, we admit it, and we love to proclaim it, that these assemblies, where charity presides, are frequent, and they all testify your liberality; but, my dear friends, you must allow us to ask if the sums are great, what is the extent of the sacrifice which each of you sustains? Is that also great? I appeal to the most opulent and most generous amongst you—what is your donation when compared with your immense revenues! What proportion does it bear to your expenditure of a year or of a month? Ah! we must humble ourselves, and fear that we have too cheaply purchased the reputation of being magnificent benefactors to the poor.

What other objection will you advance? Is it that the poor are undeserving of the interest which we wish to inspire in their favour? that there are impostors and dissolute persons amongst them, who consume, in debauchery, what they have extorted from too confiding charity? Time requires, my brethren, that I should answer this objection briefly. I may reply, in the first place, that in a doubtful case it would be dreadful to refuse an unfortunate man the small assistance which he solicits, on account of the mere possibility that he may abuse it. I will admit that, perhaps, this man who is clothed in rags may be an impostor; but perhaps he is also an unfortunate father of a family whom want and sorrow have driven, for the first time, from the miserable hiding-place where he left a starving wife and children screaming for relief. He has armed himself with all his courage to beg the bread which his family implores with heart-rending lamentations. A refusal of the first petition which he makes may crush his heart, and force him to shroud himself in his despair and die. Will you be guiltless of his misfortune before God? I may reply, secondly, that if an unfortunate man sometimes abuses your favours, you have more frequently abused those of Providence, whilst it, nevertheless, continues to lavish them upon you; and that it is not just to exercise a rigour towards your fellow-men which God Himself does not exercise towards you.

But, without dwelling upon such replies, is it not enough

for me to say to you, that you can fear no such deception in the charity whose claims I now advocate; that those tender orphans are children blessed by Heaven, separated, almost from the cradle, from the contagion of the world, nourished by the milk of piety, brought up in innocence of life, and habits of honest industry, and carefully formed by virtuous mistresses to become Christian wives and mothers hereafter. They have already begun with their industry to pay a portion of that debt which they owe to their benefactors, and to society at large. They are recommended to you by many considerations. They are the children of Providence, the nurselings of charity, the object of the unwearied care of the venerable pastor of this parish. They ask you now for the means of support. Do not reject their entreaties; and may that God who has declared that He will reward every favour which is conferred upon the least of these little ones, as if it were given in His own person,* reward your charity with His choicest graces and blessings in this life, and with eternal glory in the next! *Amen.*

SERMON ON THE ADVANTAGES OF ALMS-GIVING.

PREACHED IN PARIS, ON THE 29TH OF FEBRUARY, 1820, FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUTH CONFINED IN PRISON.

"I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bonds. Onesimus."—*Philemon* 10.

Saint Paul, while imprisoned for the Gospel in Rome, had gained over to Jesus Christ and to virtue a young fugitive slave named Onesimus, who had incurred the indignation of his master, and merited the vengeance of the law. Having brought him back from his errors, and having reconciled him with Heaven, the Apostle regards himself as a father, and is unable to restrain his affection for him. Oh! how earnestly does he sue for pardon from a justly enraged master! how pathetic and urgent his expressions are! "I, Paul," he says, "who by virtue of my apostleship, am entitled to command you, supplicate you by my gray hairs, and by the captivity which I endure for Jesus Christ, to act favourably towards my son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. He has given you cause of complaint, but he will henceforth be your consolation and

* *Matt.* xxv. 45.

my crown. Receive him as you would receive myself. Do not treat him as a criminal, for he is no longer one, nor as a slave, for he should cease to be one, but as a tenderly beloved brother, for such has he become by his conversion and my baptism. Whatever service it may be in your power to render him will never surpass my desires, nor what I expect from your charity, which is already known to me."

It is with a like zeal and confidence, my brethren, that men who are devoted to works of Christian benevolence present to you this day, not one Onesimus but many whom they have also begotten to virtue in bonds, whom they love with a tenderness proportioned to the care which their conversion has cost them, and on behalf of whom they implore the most earnest compassion. *Obsecro vos pro filio meo quem genui in vinculis.* "These poor children," say they, "have had the misfortune of transgressing at that early age when man is scarce able to know himself. If they were left to follow their own inclinations, they may, perhaps, be dangerous to society; but if they be reformed and regenerated from the earliest dawn of youth, they will be useful and irreproachable members of that society for the time to come. *Quia liquando inutilis fuit, nunc autem utilis.** Perhaps it was by a mysterious permission from Heaven that they erred so early, in order that a speedy return may fortify them in righteousness for evermore. Some of them are indebted to this calamity for the grace of baptism, and others for the knowledge of those salutary precepts which are the sole foundation of probity and morality; they will all, perhaps, be indebted to it for their eternal happiness. *Forsitan ideo discessit ad horam ut in æternum illum reciperes.*† Banish from your recollection these errors which have been expiated and repaired. You no longer behold the sad slaves of passion, but hearts set free by grace—children newly born, who have been placed in a state of innocence—brothers and children in Jesus Christ who merit your most affectionate interest. *Jam non ut servum sed pro servo charissimum fratrem.*‡ We are their fathers. Our hearts will be torn if yours be closed against them; but our joy will be at its height, and we will feel ourselves sufficiently rewarded for all our labours, if you open your hearts to them, and if you put them in a condition of accomplishing all the good which we are disposed to effect for them." *Refice viscera mea in Domino.*§

Such are the words which are addressed to you by those who have rescued these unfortunate beings from the abyss, to

* *Philem.* 11. † *Ibid.* 15. ‡ *Ibid.* 16. § *Ibid.* 20.

make them Christians, citizens, and men, and who, encouraged by their first success, have undertaken to multiply the conquests of virtue in the sad abodes of crime. We have no doubt but that, independently of our observations, such a generous design will, of itself, awaken your charity—that charity, my brethren, which is always found to be so generous, even upon occasions of less interest; but although our exhortations may seem superfluous, respect for our ministry forbids us to remain silent when there is question of a work which is so precious to religion, to our country, and to human nature. It is our duty to animate the zeal of those who contribute their care or their fortune to that work; but what can animate them more effectually than the magnificence of the promises which God has held forth to benevolent and compassionate souls—a magnificence which is really without limits; for all the blessings of time and eternity are the reward of such acts of mercy. These two points will form the subject of our consideration—first, the spiritual blessings, and secondly, the temporal blessings which are promised to alms-giving.

Great God! Sovereign Master and Father of the human race, who dost perform whatever pleaseth Thee in heaven or on earth, in presence of whom men are like the grass of the field, which grows up in the morning and withers in the evening, or is cut down at mid-day, make us comprehend that Thy designs, whether they be rigorous or merciful, ought to be humbly adored by Thy creatures; teach us to sanctify those days which are always consecrated to penance by compunction of heart, by fasting and prayer, that we may thus induce Thy justice to relax its rigour, and avert those terrible scourges which perhaps Thy anger reserves for us; and above all, grant that we may not neglect to perform works of mercy; for Thou dost promise to reward tender and benevolent souls. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—Although the promises which are held out to the compassionate soul are great and sublime, they should not surprise us, if we consider the astonishing relations which alms-giving establishes between man who practises it, and God who rewards it; for although it must seem that the Creator can never contract a debt towards His creature, that the creature cannot confer a benefit upon the Author of its existence, it nevertheless happens, through the extraordinary effect and the divine privilege of alms-giving, that it makes God the debtor of man, and man the benefactor of his God. It is expressly stated in the sacred Scriptures that to bestow alms upon the poor is to lend to the

Lord, and that He will repay the debt with usury. *Feneratur Domino qui miseretur pauperis, et vicissitudinem suam reddet ei.** God is therefore a debtor to the charitable man. But where do we find that man is the benefactor of God? Ah, my dear brethren, who could have forgotten those words which are the most affecting in the whole Gospel? *As long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me.*† Here God receives and acknowledges the bounty of man. As He can only discharge His debt and gratitude in a godlike manner —that is to say, with an unlimited fidelity and generosity— the reward attached to alms-giving must therefore of necessity be immense. I am not astonished, therefore, to hear from the lips of the Saviour these expressive and magnificent words, *Give and it shall be given to you. Date et dabitur vobis.*‡ But what shall be given? *A good measure and pressed down, and shaken together and running over*—an abundant and super-abundant measure. *Mensuram bonum et confertam et coagitatum at supereffluentum.*§ It is the measure of Divine liberality; it is altogether infinite; and every blessing is included in it. But at present we must speak merely of the goods of eternity— the spiritual blessings which are attached to alms giving.

Transport yourselves in spirit to the last day, and behold the Sovereign Judge seeming to decree His rewards to works of mercy alone, as if he recognised no other title to a blessed immortality. Hear the Evangelist. *Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.*‖ Thus He acquits his personal obligations, and, as it were, the engagements which He has contracted; He restores what He has received; He rewards the service which has been rendered to Him. But how does He make that compensation? And with what interest? He has received, in the person of the poor, a morsel of bread, some pieces of base metal, perhaps a cup of cold water, and in return He bestows torrents of delights, all the treasures of His Father's house, a heavenly crown and kingdom. *Possedit regnum.* He has received in the person of a prisoner or sick person, some feeble assistance,

* *Prov.* xix. 17. † *Matt.* xxv. 40. ‡ *Luke* vi. 31.
§ *Ibid.* ‖ *Matt.* xxv. 34.

some passing relief, and He bestows in return happiness without measure, an eternal life. *Ibunt in vitam æternam.** Oh! bounteous liberality of the Sovereign Master to charitable souls!

Observe, my brethren, that the various works of mercy which are so carefully enumerated and so liberally rewarded by Jesus Christ, are all combined in the work whose cause we advocate; for every description of want and misery presses at the same time upon these unfortunate children, and they have been all relieved. Their hunger and thirst have been appeased, their nakedness clothed, their diseases healed, the rigours of their sad captivity alleviated, and when they escaped at length from these gloomy cells, in which they expiated their transgressions, they have found an asylum prepared in that hospitable house which has been so appropriately styled a refuge, in which an attentive charity daily provides for all their wants. *In carcere eramus et venistis ad me.*† To this has been added another favour of still greater value because it relates to the soul, which is infinitely more precious than the body. Their ignorance has been instructed, their faults have been corrected, fatal errors have given place in their hearts to the truths of salvation, and their hearts have been laid open to the purest feelings of honour and religion. What blessings are included in the relief afforded them! and therefore, my brethren, what merits will you not acquire by your co-operation in it! If, then, you have any zeal for your salvation, if you value the advantage of having God Himself as your debtor, if the happiness of the life to come affects you, seize upon this favourable opportunity of gaining an immortal crown.

Whilst I propose these great motives to your faith, is there any cause to fear that like the carnal Jews, you may say within your hearts, "Minister of the Lord, if you would excite our desires efficaciously, speak to us rather about some immediate and sensible interest, for these goods, which are placed at such a distance from us, in an obscure futurity and a distant world, can make no deep impression upon our hearts." Ah! my brethren, how painful would it be to imagine that such were your sentiments. I am very far from believing that they are. However, if such were the case—if it were true, which God forbid, that you had fallen into that disgust and insensibility respecting your only real goods—do not suppose that we, who are the preachers of blessed hopes, the heralds and the ambassadors of the future kingdom of God, should ever degrade our

* *Matt.* xxv. 46. † *Ibid.* 36.

ministry so far as to come here before the altars to propose nothing to you except your earthly and perishable interests. We would descend from our pulpits where the glad tidings could no longer be announced, and seek among the villages and rural districts for a people less indifferent to their eternal welfare; we would cross the seas, if necessary, to labour like our predecessors amongst barbarous nations, and awaken that instinct of immortality which was extinguished amongst you. And what course would be left to yourselves, if you were degraded to such a degree, but to abandon these temples and the name of Christians, and all the religion of a crucified God who has come upon earth for no other purpose than to teach us to despise those things which pass away, and to sacrifice all things, in order to obtain those which shall remain for ever? What can Jesus Christ possess in common with those men, who have not even as much wisdom and elevation of soul as the very pagans? For, in every age, and in the midst of the thickest darkness of idolatry, men who were separated from the vulgar, and endowed with true wisdom, have felt the nothingness of this miserable life, and elevated their desires to a blessed and more lasting existence. And shall we, who are surrounded by all the light of Christianity, be more blind than they?

But, independently of those lights, I ask you was there ever a time when we ought to be more desirous of the hopes of a future world than at the present time? When had the present world less to dazzle or delight its votaries? What pure or tranquil pleasure do we enjoy to which we could attach our hearts! Where is there a retreat at present inaccessible to uneasiness and disquiet, that we may endeavour to find repose there? Amidst the universal disturbance and confusion which reign through the world, where shall we find the pleasures of a select society, united together by mutual confidence and an unanimity of feeling, that we may feel a pleasure in it? Show me, after so many revolutions, a title or dignity which is not dishonoured or disgraced in some respect, that I may aspire to it. Show me any greatness which is not surrounded with precipices, that it may excite my ambition, or any fortune which may seem certain, at least for a day, that I may centre my happiness in it. Find me a place where merit is honoured, where services are rewarded, where vice and guilt are unknown, a place where impiety does not reign, where iniquity is not triumphant, and virtue oppressed—a place where the wicked are not allowed to form conspiracies in open day, where we must not tremble every moment at the storms which are

gathering for the next, that I may take up my abode in that happy country. In a word, find me a place here below which can still deceive a virtuous man so far as to afford him joy or consolation, that I may forget my heavenly country, to enjoy this land of exile. But, if this earth is nothing more than a scene of disorder, of injustice, of perfidy, and too often of murder, how shall I cease to sigh after thy tabernacles, O heavenly Jerusalem! O habitation of unalterable repose, of pure and everlasting joy, of unwearying happiness and perfect security! Ah! may my right arm become motionless, may my parched tongue cleave to my mouth, before I banish thee from my memory, or suffer the love of thee to grow weakened in my heart.

My brethren, if the happiness of the present life possessed something more substantial, would not its shortness and uncertainty be sufficient to make us despise it? Are we not incessantly hurried onwards to the grave with the rapidity of a torrent which nothing can stop, or restrain, and the onward course of which is accelerated by a thousand causes. Are we ever certain, when we see the rising sun, that we shall be on earth to behold its setting? Do we possess anything which may not be snatched from our grasp every moment, which may not inevitably be torn away from us by death? What will the world be to us then, but a fleeting shadow and a phantom which vanishes? What will remain for us except our works, and the necessity of enduring an awful judgment whose consequences will be eternal? To make that judgment a favourable one, the martyrs have shed their blood, the anchorites have buried themselves in deserts, and so many saints have renounced every pleasure, and all the gifts of nature, and their very liberty, and have grown old beneath the hair-shirt and sack-cloth. That you may obtain a grace which they have purchased at so dear a rate, we advise you, my brethren, to give at least a little gold, at least a portion of your superfluities; and in the words of our Saviour, by your liberality, to make to yourselves friends who may receive you into heavenly tabernacles. *Facite vobis amicos de mammona iniquitatis ut recipiant vos in æterna tabernacula.**

But some worldling may answer—"This advice would be a good one, if alms-giving could only exempt me from believing and practising all that religion commands. But what can I do? What I have read has filled my mind with doubts

* *Luke* xvi. 9.

respecting faith, and my heart is borne away by passions against which my reason is powerless. I am incapable of becoming fixed in any article of faith, or of regulating my habits in a Christian manner. In such a case, what other course can I pursue but to banish every thought of it as well as I can, and abandon myself to the waves like a shipwrecked mariner, who sees no haven or shore to which he can direct his course?" No, my dear friends; a refuge is left to you still. Alms-giving, indeed, cannot exempt you from your other obligations, but it will obtain supernatural and efficacious means to fulfil them. It is not a matter of rare occurrence to see infidels like you, and subject like you to guilty propensities, who, becoming suddenly moved and enlightened, return to truth and virtue, or, at least, become reconciled with heaven in their dying moments—a reward which God had granted to their liberality towards the poor. This is the fulfilment of that beautiful promise which God Himself has made by the lips of one of His prophets—"When thou shalt be afflicted at the calamity of the needy, and shalt satisfy the hungry, I shall make My light shine forth in the midst of thy darkness; I shall fill thy soul with a heavenly splendour; although vice may have penetrated into thy bones, I will rescue it from them; I will place in thy heart a spring of living water to wash away thy stains, and I will receive thee into My bosom where thou mayest enjoy an eternal repose." *Implebit splendoribus animam tuam, et ossa tua liberabit, et eris quasi portus irriguus, et requiem dabit tibi Dominus semper.**

If the sinner who is still plunged in error and vice may expect salvation from alms-giving, how great confidence should not the sinner who is already converted, feel in its efficacy? Oh! you who have sincerely returned from your evil ways, but who still tremble at the recollection of your past transgressions, because they seem too numerous, and too enormous to be forgiven, seek a remedy for your painful fears in alms-giving. Take compassion on the misery of the poor, and the Lord will take compassion on your misery. Redeem your sins by the holy profusion of your charity. *Peccata tua eleemosynis redime.*† Give generously, and all the old defilements of your soul will be effaced, and made clean unto you. *Date eleemosynam et ecce omnia munda sunt vobis.*‡ Above all, contribute by your pious liberality, as you are called upon to-day, to the conversion of other sinners, and the God of mercy shall no

* *Isaias* lviii. 11. † *Dan.* iv. 24. ‡ *Luke* xi. 41.

longer remember what you have been; for *he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.**

But how can we enumerate all the admirable effects which alms-giving produces in the order of grace? It brings down the most precious blessings of Heaven, not only upon ourselves, but upon all those who are dear to us. Attend to this, O you whose sorrow is so affecting—pious and desolate daughter, spouse, and mother, who have been weeping, those years past, over the blindness and disorders of a son, a husband, or a father, whom you love as dearly as yourself, and whom you have reason to fear that you shall see separated from you for all eternity. In vain have you hitherto made trial of all that good example, patience, affection, the most tender and urgent entreaties, and even the advice of prudent friends and charitable ministers of religion, may be able to effect. In vain have you wearied Heaven with your humble supplications, and often bedewed the ground with your tears. Ah! have recourse to the omnipotent efficacy of alms-giving. But you will tell me that you have done so already, and that you do not neglect good works. Multiply them: double your gifts; do not grow weary;—it is impossible that pious liberality, combined with prayer, could find the heart of God insensible to your affliction. It was by means of them Monica softened His heart at last, and bore away from it, as if by violence, the two-fold conversion of a wayward son, and an unbelieving husband.

Alms-giving possesses a still more wonderful efficacy. The charitable works of the living procure relief for the souls of the dead. They form, as it were, a refreshing dew which subdues the violence of the expiatory flames, and sometimes extinguishes them altogether. Alas! my dear friends, your relations, your friends, your brethren, perhaps your parents may be suffering torments in comparison with which all the afflictions of this life are as nothing. You love them. If they were still on earth, if they still endured such bitter affliction before your eyes, what sacrifice would you not be disposed to make, in order to relieve them! They now cry out to you from the depths of their burning prison. Their voice cannot reach your ears, but they borrow ours to tell you that it depends on you to alleviate their torments, and to shorten their duration—that they entreat you to assist the poor man with liberality, more for their own sakes than for his—and to

* *James* vi. 33.

close your ears against their misery will make you more cruel towards themselves than towards him.

But enough has been said respecting the spiritual blessings which are attached to alms-giving; let us now consider the temporal blessings which are promised to it.

II.—When religion proposes temporal interests, she proposes them in such a lofty and sublime manner, that she preserves the character and dignity which are peculiar to such a degree, that she proves herself to be no less heavenly or divine in the promises which she holds forth of the advantages of earth, than in those of the rewards of eternity; for, in the first place, she removes every sordid feeling, and she restrains all the violence of avarice by commanding us to seek the kingdom of God and His justice, before everything else,* and to assign only the last place to the desire of those perishable goods of which man is naturally so desirous; and secondly, she elevates and ennobles that desire by obliging us to have recourse to God alone with a view of performing His will, and by teaching us to expect from Him the blessings of time, with an absolute and entire dependence upon His will. Hence, she never holds out to you the paltry inducement of present gain, and of a mercenary reward; but she thus addresses you—"Everything belongs to the Master whom you serve; He alone disposes all things with supreme authority both in heaven, where His majesty visibly dwells, and upon this earth, which He governs by His Providence that works unseen. He is the Father of all mankind, and He is peculiarly attached to the poor. There is nothing He rewards with more liberality than the charity which relieves them. If you be generous to them, He will be most liberal to you. Enter not into mean speculations, or avaricious projects. Do not propose your own personal interest as a motive in your works; but let the desire of pleasing God, and the love of your neighbour, animate you. But yet, you may be certain that alms-giving is most advantageous; for its undoubted benefits are an immortal life in the world to come, and even in this world a hundred-fold of what has been given. Yes, my brethren, a hundred-fold, even in this world; for such is the express promise of the Gospel, or rather of all the Scriptures.

I cannot too strongly express my astonishment at the infatuation of the greater part of mankind—I mean of those who still profess the faith; for it must be confessed that they are in general, by no means liberal towards the poor; they ardently

* *Matt.* vi. 33.

desire the blessings of this earth; they know that such blessings are promised to charity; and yet they persist in seeking those blessings in avarice alone;—an incomprehensible oversight which is daily punished by the most cruel disappointments—a sanguinary insult which is offered to God Himself, whom those infidel Christians seem to suspect either of unwillingness or inability to keep His promise. If I question them and urge the consideration upon their attention, it will evidently follow from their answers, that their whole confidence is centred in their gold, and that they distrust Him who has created that gold, and the present world, and themselves. You, therefore, whom this reproach includes, tell us why you manifest so little compassion for the extreme necessities of the poor, whilst you shut up all your superfluous means in your coffers, or, perhaps, increase them by usury? You will exclaim, with one accord, that you possess no superfluities; and that those savings which you find fault with, are so necessary or useful to yourselves, that you cannot diminish them in the least. One of you, for instance, will say, that although you suffer no actual wants at present, you must anticipate those of the future—that you reserve a portion of what you can daily spare, in order that you may have a provision in store for days of adversity, or the gloomy season of old age. Another of you will say that you have a son to establish in the world—that you are bound to procure him an advantageous, and, if possible, an illustrious alliance, and that to fulfil such objects, you cannot be too sparing, or too careful of your savings. Another wishes to increase the income of his family, to leave estates and extensive incomes to his heirs, and in this he conceives there is nothing but what is reasonable. I shall not refer to all the other pretexts which are advanced on this subject.

To the first I would say—"You wish to make yourself independent of the chances of fortune, and to secure an abundance for yourself before the age of infirmity arrives: but on whom do all events, and the preservation of your life depend, except on Him who commands you to relieve the needy? If you disobey Him, will your riches compensate for His protection, or defend you against His wrath? Will you find them to afford a preservative against wasting anguish, against painful diseases, against other scourges, and against death itself, by which He will avenge the suffering of the neglected widow or orphan? What will then be the good of your wise savings, and the provisions so carefully made for an advanced age to which you shall never attain? What will then be your regret

for having put your trust in an insensible and powerless metal, instead of placing it altogether in the goodness and power of God, who has promised everything to mercy?"

I would say to the second—"You calculate upon a happy establishment for yourself, or for that son whom you love. But is not a faithful, affectionate, prudent, accomplished wife a gift from the hands of the Lord? Is it not He who blesses marriages by the union of hearts, by an honourable fruitfulness, and by the birth of virtuous children, who are the source of their parent's joy? If He curses your projects, on account of your hardness of heart towards the poor, may not your son be, with all his treasures, the most unfortunate of husbands and of fathers? Ah! scandals, domestic dissensions, the dishonour and extinction of your race, will, perhaps, be the bitter fruits of a choice which ambition may dictate, and whose false wisdom may be vainly applauded. Oh! blind mortals! will you never learn that the blessing of Heaven is the first acquisition of happiness, and that without benevolence it will not be given? See the pious Tobias; is it by the calculations of avarice he prepares a happy destiny for his son? Is it not precisely because he bestowed all his goods upon the poor, and reserved nothing for himself, that an Angel takes the young Tobias by the hand, conducts him to a spouse whom God Himself had chosen for him, delivered him from a monster prepared to devour him; brings him back, loaded with wealth and joy, to his father's house; restores sight to the holy old man, and tells them when He vanishes from their sight, after so many favours, that such was the reward of alms-giving, and that they should always regard it as a more precious treasure than all the hoarded wealth of the universe?" *Bona est eleemosyna magis quam, thesauros agri recondere.**

But what shall I say to him who only wishes to elevate the rank of his family, who is entirely engrossed in amassing a fortune, that he may leave those who come after him in opulence, and therefore neglects the poor? I will not now regard such conduct as odious and inhuman; but I deplore its folly. What! You hope to increase your wealth, and to transmit it to your descendants from age to age; and you will not practise almsgiving. You are a Christian; and you have not learned that gold may be sown in the hearts of the poor, as corn is sown in the ground to multiply and produce an hundred-fold—that to sow it thus in abundance is the surest means of reaping much; but that not to sow at all, or to sow with a sparing hand, is to

* "Alms is good more than to lay up treasures of gold."—*Tob.* xii. 5.

cut off all hope of an abundant harvest, as the Apostle expressly teaches. *Qui parce seminat, parce et metet; et qui seminat in benedictionibus, de benedictionibus et metet.** Do you think you can grow rich without the assistance and the blessing of God? Who will give fertility to your fields, who will impart a vivifying heat to the summer, and fertilizing showers to autumn, to make your crops and fruit grow up and ripen? who will avert the hail-storms, the tempests, the inundations, and a hundred scourges which the Almighty holds in His hands? And even though all may succeed at first, according to the extent of your most sanguine hopes and desires, who will save the treasures which have been amassed through many years of toil from being snatched away from you in a moment, by one of those fatal accidents which are the too ordinary punishment of that insensibility with which you deserve to be reproached?

Hear me, you great ones of this world, who bear such illustrious names in our annals. Your ancestors amassed great and splendid fortunes; they left to their children inheritances which have been transmitted from generation to generation in your families, almost to our own days. But what foundation did they lay for these fortunes which astonish us by their recollection? It was alms-giving. Every page of our history testifies the fact; and that immense number of hospitals, monasteries, and magnificent temples which they erected, are even at the pretent day, authentic monuments of their munificence towards the Church and the poor. As long as the spirit of faith and charity, by which they were animated, continued amongst their descendants, such immense structures of power and greatness were never known to fail! God Himself supported them with His hand, and was pleased to perpetuate an opulence which redounded to His glory and the benefit of mankind. But we must confess it with sorrow, in proportion as zeal for the performance of good works waxed cold in their ancient lines, their wealth and splendour were diminished; and when at length the decline of morality became more rapid, and the profuseness of luxury and voluptuousness gave place to these acts of sacred liberality; when charity, grown cold, seemed ready to expire, the impetuous blast of revolutions, which is that of Divine wrath, blew upon them, and nothing could afterwards be seen except the ruins of those famous fortunes which had lived through so many ages, and survived

* "He who soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap in blessings."—2 *Cor.* ix. 6.

so many storms. Would you then successfully rebuild the edifice which has been thus pulled down? Build it upon the foundation on which it has been first erected and so long upheld. Do not suppose that you be restored to the splendour of your fathers, unless you imitate the care which they have taken to adorn the altars, and to relieve the suffering members of Jesus Christ.

We may address the same advice, to a certain extent, to men of every class. How many upright and respectable families have we seen in our childhood, in which piety, probity, and the practice of alms-giving were hereditary! They prospered, for they were content with increasing their means insensibly by a steady trade; they shared their gains with the needy; they lived without ambition or alarm, in an independence which was sufficient for all their desires, and they enjoyed a reputation better than any wealth. What do we behold in commerce at the present day? Enormous, and what may sometimes be styled monstrous fortunes, amassed with a scandalous rapidity by the most reckless speculations, by monopoly, by usury, by injustice, and every kind of intrigue—fortunes abhorred by the poor and accursed of Heaven, which are soon squandered in foolish profusion, and sooner or later buried with a crash in the depths of an ignominious bankruptcy. Thus, God gives a long course and a lasting abundance to those salutary streams which irrigate our fields, whilst He sweeps away the torrents which lay them desolate. Happy is the great and wealthy man who can unite his interests with those of the humble and unfortunate! The Lord will bless all his efforts and undertakings, and give him abundance, that he may give abundantly in return, as He fills those springs which gives water to a whole people.

Alms-giving is the source, not only of the well-being of individuals, but also of public prosperity. Recollect, my brethren, the most brilliant period of our history—the ever-memorable age of Louis the Great, when all glories combined imparted to this country a splendour with which other nations have been and still are dazzled. That power and glory has been ascribed to the wisdom and magnanimity of the monarch, to the talents of his officers, the valour of his armies, his profound political views, and some mysterious universal combination of intellects favourable to science, literature, industry, the arts, and all other great and useful properties which constitute the splendour and strength of states. I am willing to admit the existence of all these means; but there is another loftier and more secret cause of which we never think, and which is

perhaps, more worthy of your attention. If you contrast that season of prosperity to which I allude, with the protracted period of the civil wars, the disturbances, and finally the exhaustion and weakness which immediately preceded, you must admit that so speedy and miraculous a change is inexplicable without a special intervention of Heaven. But it is worthy of remark, that precisely during the interval which separates these two periods, which are of so different a character, there appeared an extraordinary man, a great saint, whose name is no less celebrated than that of the great king to whom I have just referred—that this man, endowed with an unbounded charity, enkindled in the hearts of all a zeal, or, I should rather say, a passion for good works, and carried it so far, that never since the days of the infant Church have the enterprises of Christian benevolence been so vast and varied, and never have its effusions been so abundant—that when all classes vied with each other in generosity, and all were engaged in the same emulation of divesting themselves of all things, no miserable being remained without relief; and even in cases of great distress, generosity far exceeded the public misery.

This is what drew down blessings upon your country, and made it a sharer in that glory of which we speak. Yes; I venture to assert that what then recruited the finances of the state and filled its treasury were the forty millions which were distributed with unprecedented liberality, not only through all our provinces, but through the whole of Europe, and even in the farthest extremities of the earth. The armies which gained so many battles were the countless multitudes of the aged, the orphans, the widows, and the sick who were gathered together and consoled, clothed, supported, and rescued from almost certain death. The bastions and the ramparts which secured our frontiers were the spacious and convenient hospitals which were erected throughout our cities and rural districts, to be the refuge of all human infirmities. Vincent of Paul repulsed the battalions of our enemies more successfully than Condé and Turenne; and he was better than Vauban in making France impregnable to the assaults of every foe.

My brethren, your country which is now humbled, unfortunate, and rent by factions, requires that you should apply the same remedy upon this day. What we chiefly stand in need of is, the efficacious benediction, the prayer of the poor, which is always heard. If our calamities are great, those of the poor are infinite, and feebly relieved. We who are in want of nothing see only our own losses and dangers; and perhaps we are tempted to complain; but God sees their absolute want of

every thing, their sufferings, their profound desolation; and perhaps He is enraged against us. How many among them blaspheme Heaven in their despair, or cause themselves an awful death for which there is reason to fear that we shall have to answer, and yet, who divests himself of his possessions, who thinks of retrenching, I will not say his necessaries, God forbid that I should—or even what is suitable and useful to him—for that would also be too much—but who thinks of retrenching even a portion of his real superfluities, of the luxury of his table and dress, of his curiosity, his vanity, or his voluptuousness, to save the lives of so many unfortunate creatures.

I do not mean to withhold that tribute of justice which is due to you, my brethren. Your charity is sincere; it is also generous; and of this you daily afford consoling proofs. Good works are encouraged; ancient institutions, which have been created by the genius of charity, have been re-established and supported by your liberality; new ones have been formed which are not abandoned; and amongst that number may be reckoned the institution in support of which you are assembled upon this day. Generous souls are still to be found who are magnificent in their donations; and hence the public fortune, which has long been tottering, is not altogether fallen. If hope, which had often nearly vanished, still remains—if the most detestable assaults have not been attended by the results which were anticipated by the guilty—I have no doubt that we ought to thank those repeated acts of mercy which are at least sufficient to stop us upon the brink of our fall, and to keep us, as it were, suspended over the abyss. But to extricate us from our danger, still greater liberality is required. That God should endeavour to perform miracles in our favour, we must endeavour to perform wonders in favour of the poor; that He should take our cause into His hands, we must embrace His, and do honour by extraordinary works to His religion, which is openly assailed.

Can any one now fail to perceive that this holy religion is our only means of salvation? Every blow which has been aimed against it has fallen upon ourselves. If the throne wants support, it is because that men wished to give it a different foundation besides the altar. Unbelief has given birth to all our calamities; it has protracted them during a period of twenty-five years; and it renews them at the present day. Apostacy and blasphemy are the prelude of every crime, as they have ever been. Before public authority became incompetent to protect life from the dagger of the assassin, the laws had

ceased to protect the worship of the true God; before plots which were truly infernal, had come to light, hell had been publicly invoked as the divinity of some; before royal majesty had been insulted by revolting scenes, the name of Jesus Christ had been loaded with insults, His cross profaned, and His ministers ignominiously expelled.

How, then, shall we vindicate religion from so many indignities? Not by opposing violence against violence, for she forbids us; but by practising more amiable virtues than she commands—by forcing her very enemies to respect her, and, if possible, to love her for the favours which she confers. What can be more honourable to religion than the motive which assembles you at the present moment? Whilst infidels conspire in secret for the ruin of the state and the misfortune of their fellow-men, she calls on us to conspire in her temple for the relief of human nature and the good of our country. Whilst atheism profusely circulates the moral poison of its books and doctrines, corrupts every age and condition, forms precocious villains, and, extraordinary fact! fills the prisons with criminals that have scarce left their cradles, how delightful it is to see religion extending her benign influence into those dark abodes, bringing back those wayward hearts once more to virtue, becoming their instructress and their mother, providing for all their wants, forming them to habits of piety and industry, and restoring them at length to society as pure and innocent as she had found them disorderly and guilty in their dungeons.

Let not these expressions afflict you, my children, who are the object of our solicitude and love. We speak of your past errors only to make your present title to the esteem of those who hear us be more strongly appreciated. We would not reproach you with faults already pardoned; we know that your tears have washed away every vestige of them: and, like God Himself, we place the sincere penitent in the same rank with the just man. But always cherish the recollection of the salutary lessons which you have been taught. Detest nothing so much as infidelity, which is the origin of every disorder and of every crime. Justify by a life which shall be stainless for the time to come, the hopes which we have conceived of you, and the interest which so many affectionate hearts have felt in your welfare. Feel an unbounded gratitude to God above all, and next to Him, to every one of those who have co-operated in rendering you the most precious of all favours—peace of conscience, religion, and a character above reproach.

We venture to promise you, my dear friends, that these chil-

dren will not prove themselves unworthy of your favours and those of Providence. The house of refuge in which they dwell is a school of piety and virtue. They are brought up there beneath the eyes of these venerable brothers of the Christian schools, whose very name is a commendation, as the world has learned to know them well. The opposition of another institution, which is altogether profane, has made their services better appreciated, and they have been honoured with all the hatred of the wicked. Under such charitable and vigilant masters, those youthful penitents are filled with the fear of God and the horror of vice. Sixteen of them who have already gone forth from this asylum, are now living respectably with virtuous tradesmen, whose esteem and confidence they continue to merit more and more. Some of them have died, and have given such affecting signs of compunction and faith, that I wish I could give you a detailed narrative of their last moments. Others among them, who returned to their families, have become models of edification, and introduced amongst them the observances of religion which had been previously unknown. Those whom you now behold are perhaps about to furnish still loftier examples. But all this good cannot be sustained unless by your donations. The managers of this valuable establishment are full of zeal; they consecrate to it their time, their labour, their repose, with a disinterestedness most worthy of our admiration; but they expect that your charity will furnish them with the means of supporting these young children whom they have rescued from the abyss, and many others besides who, they hope, may be able to enjoy the same advantages. Oh! how this must move your hearts, my brethren. The prisons at this moment contain seventy-two poor children, who by their penitential spirit, by the regularity of their conduct, by their application to the religious instructions which they receive, deserve to be selected for a release from this dreadful abode, and to go into the house of refuge, which is the object of their most earnest wishes. Their destiny is in your hands; and of this they are well aware. They have long been ardently wishing for this day, and while I speak to you they are agitated by hope and fear. You are about to determine their happiness for this life, and perhaps for all eternity. If your offerings be abundant enough, every one of these will be admitted into this hospitable abode, where they will receive all the blessings of a Christian education; they will become virtuous members of society; they will not cease to bless you till their dying hour. If your offerings be insufficient———. But I cannot admit the supposition, my brethren. In the name of tender compassion,

in the name of all the blessings which are attached to almsgiving, in the names of your relatives and friends whose souls are suffering in the prisons of purgatory, in the name of religion, of humanity, and of your country, save those poor creatures; perhaps you may yet be indebted for your salvation to that which you shall have procured for them. *Amen.*

SERMON ON BEHALF OF THE MISSION OF LOUISIANA.

PREACHED AT THE CHURCH OF SAINT SULPICE, IN PARIS, ON THE 25TH JANUARY, 1821.

"And we have sent with them our brother also whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, with much confidence in you: wherefore show ye to them, in the sight of the churches, the evidence of your charity and of our boasting in your behalf."—2 *Corinth.* viii. 22-24.

In the bright days of primitive Christianity, all the churches were poor, and persecuted in their turn, and sufferings and privations were their common portion; but whenever any one of them experienced extraordinary necessities, from a pre-eminence in calamity or persecution, all the others, forgetful of their own wants and individual afflictions, anxiously endeavoured to assist the sufferers, with an emulation of charity which has merited the admiration of every succeeding age. Neither distance of place, nor difference in language and habits, nor the prejudices and interests which keep nations asunder, were capable of retarding the sacred profusion of that truly Christian benevolence: and the wisdom and authority of the Apostles themselves were scarce sufficient to moderate its pious excesses, and to confine it within reasonable limits. Accordingly, the faithful of Macedonia were no sooner apprised of the distress into which those of Jerusalem had fallen, than burning with a desire to relieve them, they even resolved to divest themselves of all things for their sakes, so that even the great soul of St. Paul, amazed at such excessive generosity, was unable to find words adequate to express the commendation which they deserved. He declared that he had not strength or language sufficient to commend them, because they were liberal *according to their power, and beyond their power*:* that

* 2 *Cor.* viii. 3.

even amid the tribulations which overwhelmed them, they were solely affected by the joy of distributing favours; that *their very deep poverty** had been rich and splendid in its gifts; that they made an offering of their very life and substance with the most urgent entreaties to him, that he may allow them to sacrifice themselves without reserve for their brethren. *Cum multa exhortatione obsecrantes semetipsos dederunt.*† Such was the testimony which he bore on their behalf when writing to the Corinthians; and equally certain of the generous dispositions of these also, he declares that it would be superfluous to exhort them to follow such a bright example; that their earnestness had anticipated his wishes; that they deserved to be held up as models to other churches; and he knew that their alms, which had long since been ready, only awaited the hand to receive them. Therefore it was that he confidently sent them a beloved brother, of whose fidelity and devotedness he was aware, so that when he arrived amongst them, the charity by which they were actuated should appear for their glory and his own in the sight of all the churches. *Ostensionem ergo charitatis vestræ, et nostræ gloriæ pro vobis ostendite in faciem ecclesiarum.*

And do we not, this day, my brethren, behold something like what happened in these happier times? A worthy successor of the Apostles—the Apostle of a new world also—after having more than once traversed vast oceans, and travelled, with incredible fatigue, over pathless and deserted regions, to carry the light of true religion, and all the blessings which attend it, to those amongst whom it is forgotten or unknown—after having, within the short period of three years, laid the foundation of incalculable good—having transferred our most useful institutions to another hemisphere, having won the hearts of thousands, and provided, at the same time, for the reformation of morals, for the union of Christians whom schism had separated, for the conversion of infidels, and the civilization of barbarians—and being now unable, from his own resources (for, alas! he is rich only in privations), to finish an enterprise so noble and so happily begun—he now solicits, on behalf of his infant Church, the assistance of the ancient Churches of Europe, and chiefly of his native land. Like Paul, he sends us another Titus, a chosen disciple, the witness of his labours, and a co-operator in them; the depository of all his thoughts, in order that learning from his faithful lips, his designs, his efforts, his hopes, his success, and his necessities, or

* 2 *Cor.* viii. 3. † *Ibid.* 4, 5.

rather the necessities of a flock ever increasing, and which seem likely to be soon innumerable, you may avail yourselves of so favourable an opportunity to exhibit, in the presence of both worlds, a charity already signalized by so many good works, whose effects are conspicuous everywhere around you, and whose renown has already reached the remotest ends of the earth. *Misimus fratrem nostrum confidentia multa in vos: ostensionem ergo quæ est charitatis vestræ ostendite in faciem ecclesiarum.*

This condition, which is so creditable to you, has not been disappointed. The messenger of this venerable bishop has been received amongst you as the messengers of the Apostles were formerly received amongst the faithful. The marks of regard which he has everywhere received are a sufficient assurance that his ministry will not be fruitless, and that my advocacy of his cause, which I have undertaken for him, will not be listened to without interest. I shall submit no consideration unworthy of the exalted, noble, and Christian souls whom I address. I shall show them at the glory of religion, and that of the French nation, both alike invite them to contribute their aid to the mighty good which is now proposed to them. And may the Lord, on whose behalf I plead, grant me the grace of making them feel these truths as deeply as I now feel them myself. Thus shall my object be attained, and all my wishes accomplished. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I. It is the destiny of religion, like the sun in its course, to traverse the whole earth, diffusing light and animation all around. She visits successively or simultaneously, but always in the order which pleases her Almighty Author, the regions of the north and south, of the east and west. Her course has been marked out from the very beginning; and she must pursue and complete that course whilst no obstacles can ever impede her progress. Heaven and earth must pass away before the word of Him who has said *This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, Prædicabitur hoc evangelium regni in universo orbe,** can pass away. There shall be no country, however remote or barbarous, where its heavenly light and salutary warmth must not penetrate. *Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.*† Though all the kings and nations of the earth may be leagued in concert to falsify this oracle, their efforts will only serve to assist and to expedite its fulfilment.

* *Matt.* xxiv. 14.

† "There is no one that can hide himself from his heat."—*Ps.* xviii. 7.

Read the history of by-gone ages. Religion is persecuted in one place, and she passes away to another; attempts are made to destroy her, but she enlarges the sphere of her dominion; she seems to fly, but she only disappears for a moment, to take possession of another portion of her inheritance; like a monarch sometimes disowned and despised, but never deposed or defeated, she passes through this world which is her vast and boundless territory; her heavenly authority finds her subjects; fruitfulness supplies her with children everywhere; and the nations, whom she has brought forth by grace, submissive to her sacred yoke, constitute her great family and her immortal empire.

When the Jews, at her birth attempted to reduce her to captivity, and to destroy her, the Apostles merely say, *Behold, we turn to the Gentiles;** and an idolatrous world is instantly filled with Christians ready to die for her sake. When, shortly after—whilst she is still in her infancy—the Roman power takes up arms and displays all its might against her—when the blood of her disciples flows profusely through the whole extent of the empire during three centuries—when a proud and cruel tyrant, at the close of a long series of persecutions, flatters himself that their work had been at length accomplished—when ostentatious inscriptions claim for him the glory of having abolished the worship and the name of Jesus Christ, for all time and in all places—ten years have not elapsed before Rome, its armies, its senate, its emperors, and the world at large, prostrate before the cross of Jesus Christ, dispel the illusion of that short-lived triumph. In ages nearer to our own, when a fatal spirit of schism rent her heart asunder, and bore away a considerable portion of her children, and seduced whole nations from her obedience, to repair her losses she merely looks towards the boundless regions of the east; the ways at once are opened; her vessels cleave the seas; her rapid messengers are borne upon the winds; India resounds with the Name of Jesus; thirty kingdoms, and islands without number, are gained over to the faith by Francis Xavier alone; a million infidels receive baptism from his hands; China and Japan are astonished at the knowledge of the true God; and at seeing their adorers and martyrs multiplied in the midst of them. In our days, alas!—in that France which has so long been a Christian land—when infidelity employed the most vigorous efforts that were ever exerted against the Church—when it marshalled, under the same banner, every

* *Acts* xii. 46.

sect, every profession, every interest, every talent, every vice to contend against her—when it employed calumny, and proscription, and slaughter as the instrument of its assaults—when temples and altars fell beneath its stroke when the sacred ministers, and the faithful who had escaped the sword of the executioner, were scattered like dust over the face of the earth—when it was proclaimed once again, with more display than in the days of Diocletian, that Christianity was abolished, and her priests exterminated, and all her hopes dispelled—what was the result of so much noise and madness? Infidelity, victorious by guilt, and stained with blood, became only more detestable; those whom its hypocritical moderation had seduced became at last aware of their delusion; all, except such as desired the ruin of society and the subversion of the world, abandoned it; that persecuted religion, covered with wounds, bathed in tears, and amidst so many sufferings always amiable, always benevolent, and breathing only love for its enemies, seemed more amiable and more august than ever; celebrated infidels, affected and overcome, returned to her with magnificence; a whole nation which her absence had sunk in a dreadful chaos, demanded her once more with loud entreaties; and even those who still obstinately persist in hating her, have been compelled to admit that she is the greatest and the most indispensable want of a people.

But what has been her fate before she was called back to us, whilst she has been still a wanderer in foreign lands? The lawful spouse of heaven's King, bearing on her brow a distinctive mark, which no suffering can efface, she is everywhere received with honour, even in places where rival sects bore sway. Princes and people, who lived not beneath her laws, with generous eagerness afford an asylum to that holy fugitive; they open their treasures for her acceptance; they levy tributes to support her; for an assurance has been given her that she shall be *nursed with the breasts of kings*.* In the land of her exile she freely sings the hymns of Sion, and her affecting voice wins every heart into sympathy for her sorrow. Her priests, her monks, her virgins astonish the hospitable shores which receive them, by the manifestation of angelic virtues which these lands had never known before. Samaria beholds with admiration the tents of Juda; and the separated tribes feel their love for the house of David again revived. Oh! my God, what are the designs of Thy wisdom? Hast Thou permitted Thy Church to suffer these humiliations only to pre

* *Isaias* lx. 16.

pare her for greater consolation. Have not her barriers fallen, only to facilitate the return of those whose desertion and loss she deplored? Are we arriving at the period of such an auspicious return? And has all the success of triumphant infidelity ended in convincing the world at last that it is only in the bosom of Catholic unity that a certain refuge can be found from the most foolish errors and the most fatal crimes?

But we must wait for time to bring about the favourable designs of an inscrutable Providence, and to conduct these designs to a final issue, in the countries where obstacles, which that Providence can alone remove, are still retarding the fulfilment of our desires; and if we look for the more immediate fulfilment of our hopes, let us look to that other hemisphere, from which the Atlantic separates us, and where a course of more prosperous fortune already begins for religion.

At that period which is still so recent, when the United States of America proclaimed their independence, and erected themselves into a distinct nation, in all that vast extent of country which is now included within their jurisdiction, there was not a single episcopal see, and not even one Catholic temple. A few of the faithful, dispersed here and there, like sheep without a shepherd, and destitute of all resource in their spiritual necessities, except the precarious aid of a few scattered missionaries, constituted the sole flock of the Church, in such a considerable portion of the new world—a feeble foundation of the Catholic faith—an almost imperceptible point in the midst of more than twenty different sects which concealed it, and seemed almost to extinguish it beneath their shadow. But the grain of mustard seed must increase. In less than five years, that little family, so obscure and forsaken, becomes a mighty people, which attracts the attention of the whole Christian faith, and the solicitude of the head of the Church; many parishes were established under the name of congregations, and churches were erected everywhere. In 1789, that very year which has acquired such a melancholy celebrity amongst ourselves, in which those events began, which have ended in the total ruin of the French hierarchy, an episcopal see was established, for the first time, at Baltimore, and the first diocesan synod was solemnly held in that city. Shortly after, a bishop was given to that Louisiana, to which I shall shortly direct your attention. Faith extends her victories, and piety flourishes there. Zealous priests, whom persecution had banished from amongst us, carry to these distant shores the fire with which they were inflamed. Seminaries were established, and confided to the famous congregation of St. Sulpice.

America enjoys its communities of religious, of virgins consecrated to the Lord, and solitaries devoted to the most austere penance. All that has been destroyed here springs up again, and is widely propagated beyond the seas. Societies of apostolic men travel through the cities and rural districts, preaching the Gospel with unwearied activity, and day after day augmenting the faithful flock, whose rapid increase soon requires the erection of a metropolitan and four other episcopal sees. For a long time past, there have not been priests enough to supply the wants of this increasing multitude, which is already far beyond our computation, and which would be still more considerable if the numbers of the ministers were equal to their zeal. O God, who seest these fields already white, and that immense harvest ripening, send forth workmen to gather it, and vouchsafe to perfect the work of Thy mercy!

It is under such circumstances, as I have described, my brethren, that a man, animated with an ardent zeal, which is moderated by wisdom, endowed with that elevation of mind which conceives great designs, with that firmness which puts them in execution, with that mildness and patience to which every obstacle gives way, with that pure charity which desires only the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and moreover prepared for the most exalted duties of the ministry, by a long performance of its subordinate functions amongst that people, has been elevated to the episcopal dignity, and called by Heaven to govern the most important amongst the churches of that country.

The diocese of Louisiana, which is equal in extent to one half of Europe, includes within its vast territory many great states which, by the almost incredible rapidity of the yearly increase of their population, seems likely to become in a short time, one of the most populous kingdoms of the earth. Families, and entire colonies, attracted by the fertility of its soil, by the excellence of its climate, by the facilities which the immense rivers that intersect it afford to industry and commerce, by the mildness of the laws, and the liberty which they afford, are constantly crowding to it from every part of the world, and making it their permanent residence. Engrossed by the care of establishing and increasing their fortunes by their speculations and labours, that multitude of men, differing in their birth, their manners, and their belief, live together in harmony and peace; and from the amalgamation of so many different castes, a new nation is imperceptibly formed, which sooner or later, must, undoubtedly, possess a distinctive character and common principles of morality and religion, as it now possesses

those of government and legislation. At present, it forms an unexampled chaos and confusion of opposite and conflicting doctrines. Catholics, Protestants, and Anabaptists—I cannot enumerate the others; I must spare you the endless divisions and subdivisions of these various sects—are all mixed and confounded in the midst of the same cities, the same houses, the same families—most of them ignorant, in such a great diversity, of what they actually believe—destitute of ministers to instruct them, and of temples in which to pray—feeling that want which is so essential to man's nature—of rendering a worship to the Deity—and destitute of all means to appease it. Such is the spectacle presented to the eyes of the enlightened and virtuous prelate to whom the judicious selection of the Holy See has confided the care of that immense flock. A magnificent idea, such as Heaven could alone suggest, has occurred to his mind. He believes that God, who watches over the destinies of mankind, had assembled upon one spot, from all parts of the earth, so many men influenced by different opinions and prejudices, only to unite them all together in the bosom of truth, to renew the youth of His Church, to a certain extent, in a new world; and whilst ancient Christian kingdoms looked for happiness in the licentiousness of unbelief, to exhibit, at the remotest ends of the earth, a great colony, happy in its submission to the Catholic faith. He seems to hear an inward voice which says, "Oh! pastor whom I have chosen, lift up thy eyes round about and see. *Leva oculos tuos, et vide.** See the multitudes who hasten upon every sea, who come down along those mighty rivers, and land upon your shores from every side; they are thy children who come to seek thee from afar. *Filii tui de longe veniunt.*† They are a people whom I bring to receive my lessons from thy lips, and to learn from thee that true religion is what is most necessary to nations as well as to individuals. *Omnes isti congregati sunt; venerunt tibi.*‡ Look again, and see those wild and naked men who wander through the forests and the boundless deserts of those countries, and who resemble wild beasts more than they resemble men; they await thee; they, in like manner, shall be thy conquest; and hastening to thy invitation, they shall bring their children in their arms as offerings to the Lord, and shall joyfully bow down their necks beneath the yoke of civilization and the Gospel." *Afferent filios tuos in ulnis, et filias tuas super humeros portabunt* §

Filled with these images and splendid hopes, he comes to

* *Isaias* lx. 4. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid* § *Ibid.* xlix. 22.

Europe, to solicit the aid of generous souls, and to seek out fellow workers in his Apostolic mission. Rome and Paris have been filled with admiration on beholding his modesty, his magnanimity of soul, and his ardent zeal for the salvation of his flock. He returns with a retinue worthy of an Apostle—with priests, religious, fervent candidates for the sanctuary, learned instructors of youth, the venerable brethren of the Christian schools, the pious and experienced guides of the rising generation.

Oh! that I could adequately describe that voyage, so like the voyage of St. Francis Xavier, and unfold to your view a spectacle which delights the Angels—a vessel suddenly transformed into a temple, in which the adorable mysteries are daily celebrated—the waves of the ocean re-echoing the sound of the sacred hymns—the affected sailors bedewing with their tears the feet of a bishop who imparts to them his blessing, exhorts them to repentance, purifies their souls with the waters of penance, nourishes them with the bread of heaven, and leaves, in hearts unaccustomed to the tender emotions of piety, the indelible impressions of reverence and love for a religion, of which they were privileged to behold so worthy a minister.

At the close of this holy and happy voyage a more lingering and laborious journey awaits the zealous missionaries. An immense distance separates them from the spot which is destined to become the scene of their exertions; and they cross it on foot like faithful followers of the first disciples of Jesus Christ.

People of Louisiana, you who are also the people of St. Louis, and who can never be abandoned by Heaven, lift up your eyes; look round about and afar off, and see the saviours who approach to you. *Ascendent salvatores.** See them advancing unwearied through woods and morasses, across precipices and torrents, climbing the frozen summits of mountains, and leaving upon the rocks and amid the brambles the bloody tracts of their lacerated feet. Oh! how beautiful upon the mountains, should not the footsteps of those appear who come to preach peace, and to bring its glad tidings to you. *Quam speciosi super montes pedes evangelizantium pacem, evangelizantium bona.*† Behold, they approach! Come forth from your dwellings to meet those whom the God of the universe sends for your salvation.

Accordingly, my brethren, the bishop has no sooner arrived in the river which waters his diocese, than the whole popula

* *Abdias* 21. † *Isaias* lii. 7.

tion is set in commotion. Catholics, and the various communities of Protestants unite in one body, and hasten to the banks with a generous emulation of joy and veneration for him whom all regard as their common shepherd. They surround him, and follow him into the house of the Lord where he makes an oblation for all that people to the Supreme Ruler of all hearts, and offers the Lamb without stain for the salvation of his flock. The sight of our majestic and holy ceremonies, so unusual in those countries, the solemnity of the sacrifices, the profound recollection of the pontiff and the ministers around him, the words of life and truth in which he addresses the assembled multitude—all these deeply affect the minds, and produce salutary and new emotions in the hearts of all. They soon complain that the temple is too confined for the eager crowds which look for admission there; and when they enlarge it, the entire population readily contributes to the erection of a beautiful and spacious basilica, dedicated to St. Louis, the patron saint of the country; conversions are multiplied; and everything announces a return to Catholic unity. The children crowd to the Christian schools; the youth receive, in three colleges, the lessons of teachers whose learning is only equalled by their virtue; the female children are distributed between two houses, one of which is directed by the pious daughters of St. Ursula, and the other by those instructors who are so renowned amongst ourselves, and who derive from the heart of Jesus Himself the power of gaining over the youth, in order to lead them to God. Forty candidates for the sanctuary, the hope of the clergy, are confided to the care of the venerable priests of the congregation of St. Vincent of Paul. The instructions of the catechists and missionaries are eagerly listened to; but, above all, the bishop himself wins every heart by his insinuating discourse, by the sanctity of his life, by his devotedness, his labours, and the heavenly joy which he manifests in the midst of his manifold privations and oppressive fatigue. And now, men ask why there are many churches, many worships, and many doctrines—whether Jesus Christ has established more than one religion, or taught more than one Gospel upon earth—whether a more faithful guide than this worthy pastor, or a purer doctrine than he inculcates, could possibly be desired. And thus it is, that here, where a new population is springing up, where nothing has yet taken firm root, where the immense variety of sects renders the absurdity and the folly of their members the more manifest; here, owing to the care and wisdom of an apostolic man, the various Christian communions will, at length, impart to each

other the kiss of peace; here shall go forth the signal of that union which has been so long desired—for which Catholics constantly petition Heaven—of which the ministers of other Churches seem to feel the want acutely—which will, at length, put an end to the sad and fatal divisions of three hundred years—which will restore peace to Europe, and renew its destinies. Here, too, another union, no less wonderful, is no longer a subject of hope, but of actual fulfilment. Fame has borne the name and the virtues of the Bishop of Louisiana to the remotest haunts of men—in the depths of caverns and amid the gloom of forests, which are the abode of these savage tribes—a portion of his flock which has been hitherto almost unknown. The voice of God has reached these wandering sheep; they feel an anxious wish to come beside their shepherd; and they have already sent him a solemn embassy, beseeching him to visit those who know him, as yet, only by name, and who desire to be placed beneath his guidance.

Church of Jesus Christ, behold thy destiny. Mortal man cannot conceive, nor canst thou thyself comprehend thy happiness, and thy unimpaired power to bring up thy children even in thy declining years. Is it not thy voice I hear when Jerusalem exclaims, "I was barren, and brought not forth?" *Ego destituta et sola.** How, then, can I have suddenly seen myself surrounded by these new children, whom I have never known before? It is now, beyond all other times, that thou shouldst observe this language. There was a time when the kings and the mighty ones of this earth assisted thy advancement; but thou art now abandoned to thy own resources. *Ego destituta et sola.* But that shall not prevent thee from gaining less extensive or less wealthy conquests. There was a time when thou wert free—when thou didst to a certain extent bear sway; but now thou art often a fugitive, and sometimes a captive. *Ego transmigrata et captiva.*† But the power of God is always the same; the letter of the Gospel remains unchanged, and she retains her power over all mankind, because the author of nature has implanted within their hearts the feeling which brings them back from their wanderings, to embrace the faith.

Like a true father, the chief pastor of Louisiana has gone amid his children; he is at present, my brethren, amongst these savages. Oh! what tears of consolation does he shed. What virtues has he not already produced. How often have his hands, like those of Xavier, fallen down with fatigue,

* *Isaias* xlix. 21.

† *Isaias* xlix. 21.

after he had spent whole days in baptizing children and adults. But where shall he find workmen to cultivate this new vineyard? Where shall he find pastors to guide this new flock? How shall he establish the institutions necessary for their service? He calculates upon our assistance, my dear brethren? and most certainly, when he returns to his episcopal city, he will not experience the anguish of learning that we have abandoned him, or that whilst a savage people invited him, his former friends and fellow-countrymen have not condescended to cast one look of sympathy towards him.

Oh! Angel of these countries—Angel-guardian of that other land of St. Louis—hasten to tell him that he need feel no such apprehension; that we feel a most intense, a most religious, a most affectionate interest in his conquests. Tell him that we are not only citizens of France, but that we are also children of the Church—that this spiritual Jerusalem is the first object of our love, and that we shall never regard anything which affects her dearest interests, to be foreign from our sympathy. No; whilst our right arms are not withered away, we shall employ them eagerly to defend her; as long as our tongues shall not cleave to our mouths, we shall never cease to bless her name, and to proclaim her praises.

II.—We should zealously co-operate in the great work which is proposed to us, not only through love of religion, but also through love of France and the glory of a name which should be most dear to us. The country to which I direct your attention almost still belongs to France. It was won by Louis the Great, whose name it bears even to this day. It has been civilized by Frenchmen; its soil has often been crimsoned by the blood of French missionaries; and it still recalls memories which are glorious to France. The virtuous bishop, whose zeal effected such wonders there at present, and who solicits your assistance through my advocacy, is a countryman of your own; his associates are your countrymen also; and it is by means of institutions which he has brought away from the midst of you, that he regenerates infancy, youth, and every age in that country.

And not only Louisiana in particular, but the magnificent and holy work of the missions in both hemispheres, is eminently the work of Frenchmen; and no nation has borne so large a share in it as France. The conquests even of St. Francis Xavier and his associates do not belong so much to Spain and Portugal as they do to your own country. Was it not here, in this very capital of France, that Xavier, the Paul of modern times, learned the science of the saints, and received the first

sparks of that fire which he afterwards enkindled through so extensive a portion of the earth? Was it not upon that hill of martyrs, which is hard by, that he solemnly bound himself along with a small number of chosen associates, by that vow, so famous and so faithfully observed, to devote himself to the conversion of infidels throughout the world? Was it not upon that spot, and at the very same time, that the society, which was then so small, but afterwards so widely extended—which has inundated Asia, Africa, and America with its missionaries, and fertilized every part of the world with the blood of its martyrs—was it not there it first started into existence? Whence came those learned men, the everlasting honour of the missions of the East, who filled the nations of Asia with so much admiration for the arts and sciences of Europe? Were not Bossuet, Gerbillon, and Parmenin, natives of France? How numerous have not Frenchmen been amongst the apostles of the Dominican orders which conferred such important benefits upon humanity and religion in heathen lands? If this be not enough, see Vincent of Paul sending his apostolic labours from Paris to Madagascar, to the burning shores of Barbary, and the ice-bound islands of the north; see, again, beneath your very eyes, these precious nurseries of apostles, these admirable seminaries of the Holy Spirit and of the foreign missions, which have sprung up at the most flourishing period of your country's existence, which the most terrible revolution could not destroy, and which have persevered in causing the faith to be preached so successfully amongst idolaters, while such furious efforts were made to extinguish it amongst ourselves.

But, my brethren, has this zeal for the sacred work of the foreign missions been confined, in your country, to the priesthood alone? You need scarcely be reminded of all that has been done to propagate and support them in every place by so many of your Christian kings and pious queens. How great zeal has been manifested for that great work by Louis the Just, and Henry, and Louis, greater still? The last mentioned in particular, never failed to distribute his treasures, and to display his power, which was so formidable, throughout the earth, to promote the undertakings of the zealous ministers of Jesus Christ, and to protect them against the oppression of infidel authority. Your greatest princes, and their ministers, who have left behind them an immortal memory—such as Richelieu, Louvois and Colbert—always regarded the propagation of the faith as one of the most important concerns of the nation. These enlightened and sincere friends of mankind, with true wisdom, wished to promote the civilization of the

human race by the Gospel, as the enemies of all order would wish to subvert the world by the influence of atheism.

And not only kings and their ministers, but also private individuals, and amongst them your own ancestors, have been instrumental in the propagation of the Gospel. Oh, illustrious descendants of ancient and noble lines—ladies of France, no less distinguished by your birth than your virtues—and you, Frenchmen of every class, who are endowed with noble and Christian souls—recognise examples for you to follow in the persons of those whose names you perhaps still bear, whose blood perhaps circulates through your veins, and allow me to enter into a detail which ought to interest every one amongst you.

When France obtained dominion over Canada, upon that very continent of North America which engages our attention at present, the work of civilizing and instructing the wild inhabitants of that country was not undertaken by the government, but by the nobility of the court of Louis XIII., and some individuals who undertook that office, and defrayed the expense of all the establishments which were necessary for the purpose. But, with what magnificence! And how clearly does this instance prove what French hearts are capable of performing when the sublime motive of religion exalts their natural generosity. How greatly must we not admire the conduct of General de Sillery, who out of his own resources built —what do you think? A house, or an hospital? No, my brethren, but a whole village near Quebec, for the reception and maintenance of such of the Indians as embraced the faith; and thus became the founder, the father, the Second Providence of a small colony of new Christians. Can we bestow all the commendations which they deserve upon Laval, Urfe, Caylus, Lionne, Cice, and Fenelon, who relinquished all the hopes which this world afforded them, and, bidding an eternal farewell to their native land, hastened beyond the seas, to spend their lives and property in the midst of wild and savage men, to whose service they consecrated themselves? What shall I say of a lady, named La Peltrie, who consecrated her whole fortune to the erection and endowment of a convent of Ursulines, for the education of the female children of the savages; or of the Duchess of Aguilon, who not only erected the Hotel Dieu of Quebec, and supplied it with religious to attend it, but also afforded maintenance and support to all the missions with abundant liberality? What shall we say of another lady, named de Bagnols, who contributed sixty-six thousand livres for the erection of an episcopal see in the kingdom of Persia? Finally

—for I cannot pursue this detail—I everywhere behold churches, colleges, convents, and hospitals, erected by individuals, and a multitude of Frenchmen, each performing works of truly royal munificence.

Ah, Lord! I am not surprised that throughout all time Thou hast blessed and protected France—that she should have been victorious in so many conflicts—that the most tedious and cruel contentions have not crushed her power. She loved Thy Church; she extended the kingdom of Jesus Christ; she civilized savage men, by making them know Thy name; she was generous in sacrifices for the benefit of mankind.

My brethren, this is the glory which you are called upon to sustain; for we must confess that France is called upon to expiate recent guilt, and to efface disagreeable recollections. Alas! if the piety of our fathers formerly regenerated uncivilized nations, the impious rage of some of their descendants has, even in our own days, plunged the civilized world into a second barbarism. What frightful ruin have not the propagators of our pretended philosophical doctrines caused in these very same colonies where the missionaries of the Gospel had established such beautiful order and such blissful peace? And even in our ancient Europe, is there a kingdom at the present day, which flourished once, and which is now agitated and restless, but has reason to ascribe its calamities to the contagion of our maxims and examples! You have not been yourselves the cause of these calamities, my brethren; but it rests with you to repair them, and to remove that blot which obscures the glory of your name. Oh! if we could only see once more, upon the banks of those mighty rivers which flow through North America the same wonders wrought, which have imparted such a delightful celebrity to the banks of Paraguay, and that you, by your liberality, had contributed to their revival; how splendid would be the reparation of our wrong! what pure consolation would it not afford to you, and undying glory to your native land!

We sometimes boast of the glory of our armies; and, amid all our miseries, we sometimes rejoice at our conquests. And yet what has been the result of them all, except the resentment and vengeance of other nations, and sad reverses of fortune. Oh! let us be jealous of other victories—of those which make the conqueror loved, and which leave the conquered no sentiments save those of gratitude and joy. Let us subdue men and nations to Jesus Christ; let us impose on them no chains but those of the Gospel; and glorying in their subjugation,

they will ever bless our names along with the name of that God whom we shall have taught them to invoke.

My brethren, I anticipate none but generous objections upon your part. Avarice cannot contend within you with such generous sentiments as you possess; but, perhaps, the very love of good, and your attachment to other charities which come more immediately before your eyes, and whose wants may seem more urgent, may possibly retard your generosity on the present occasion. You may say, perhaps, "Have we not missions to support in France itself? Have we not our own poor, our prisoners, our orphans, our infirm, who possess urgent claims upon our charity? And must we abandon them?" God forbid, my brethren, that I should weaken your zeal for all those objects of your charity, which are so sacred and so precious to the heart; I would much rather inflame and increase it, if such were necessary. Notwithstanding my unworthiness, I, too, feel a pride in being one of those missionaries who preach the Gospel through France; and I should, therefore, appreciate the importance of that ministry, and all the encouragement which it requires. I am also aware of the miseries of so many who surround you. So far from being insensible to them, I trust I may appear more than once in this pulpit to unfold them to your view, and to urge you still more to relieve them, anxious though you be already. But, I pray you, listen to my vindication of the present work of charity.

You fear lest one good work may interfere with another; but I assure you that all works of charity, by an admirable power which they possess, on the contrary, help each other—that charity only becomes more fruitful as its treasures are exhausted—that nothing enables one to give bounteously so much as to have already given much. As the rivers which spring from the lofty mountains always receive their waters with the same abundance as they discharge them, so also alms-giving, which derives its sources from heaven, is never exhausted as long as it freely pours forth its treasure into the hearts of the poor. And if such be the case with respect to every sort of alms-giving, what shall we say of that which is far more sacred than any other, and which has for its object the salvation of a whole people, and the extension of the Church of the living God, for which alone the world receives existence and duration? Yes, I confidently assert and assure you that all you shall bestow upon this most interesting mission of the New World, which bears the impress of a mighty work of God, will be restored to you an hundred-fold, and will fall in a plenteous

shower of graces and blessings upon you, upon the missions of your country, upon your power, and upon all the objects of your meritorious solicitude. Remember Vincent of Paul, and the pious ladies who were associated with his charitable undertakings; how many works were they not obliged to support at the same time! An hundred thousand foundling children to support—hospitals of every kind to establish—a countless multitude of the miserable to relieve—three great provinces to provide with all sorts of necessaries at the period of the most awful calamities: and did all this prevent them from supporting the missions of Algiers, of Tunis, of Madagascar, of Scotland, and of my own dear and faithful Ireland? Were their resources exhausted by such liberality? No, my brethren; but they were increased and multiplied an hundred-fold; and I have not the least doubt but that it was from these distant shores, which were the scene of such generous zeal, that Vincent of Paul received those blessings from heaven which made him perform such miracles of charity, that he became the most perfect image of the Divine benevolence that this world has ever seen.

Follow this example, my brethren, and you will not err. Let not your hearts be straitened. Be not timid in the exercise of benevolence. Have confidence in God, who promises all things to those who are faithful in acts of charity, and who will not fail to accomplish all that He has promised. You have already made great sacrifices; you have made extraordinary sacrifices: but I ask you now, who has reason to regret such sacred munificence? Who has become poorer from its exercise? What have you lost? I should rather have said what have you not gained? How, then, can you apprehend that your liberality will be excessive? And must you not gladly avail yourselves of this great and solemn occasion, which God Himself affords you, to manifest your gratitude for the distinguished favours with which He has overwhelmed you!

I have therefore no hesitation in saying, my brethren, that you will act in a manner worthy of yourselves, your fathers, your nation, and the great Church which the chief pastor of an immense congregation at the farthest ends of the earth solicits for aid in such urgent need; you will act in such a manner as will demonstrate to the whole world that you are still a most Christian nation—the first-born children of the Catholic Church, ever filled with zeal for the glory and interests of their mother you will act so as to be an example to the rest of Europe, and prove what such a solemn circumstance commands. You will act so as to gladden the heart of the apostle of America, and

enable him to glory in you, as St. Paul formerly gloried in the generosity of the faithful of Corinth. *Gloriamur de vobis.**

Methinks I hear the happy bishop of Louisiana saying to his beloved neophytes, when he exhibits your gifts before them, "Behold how the Christians of France love you. Although they have not known you, see what they send you. After the sad calamities which they have themselves experienced, they have just reason to style themselves poor; but they felt that they were rich to perform an act of benevolence to you. *Paupertas eorum abundavit in divitias simplicitatis eorum.*† They have still afflictions to endure; and they are not without anxiety for the future destiny of their native land; but they have forgotten their sorrow, to sympathize with our joy, and they have found consolation in contributing to your happiness." *In multo experimento tribulationis abundantia gaudii ipsorum fuit.*‡ At these words I seem to hear exclamations of admiration and gratitude from these men who are astonished and delighted to learn by such pleasing experience what Christian charity really is; and, my brethren, God will soon hear the prayers which they will offer up for you before His throne; and they will in turn bring down upon you all the blessings of time and those of eternity. *Amen.*

SERMON IN SUPPORT OF ECCLESIASTICAL SEMINARIES.

"Then rose up the priests and Levites to build the temple of the Lord; and all they that were round about helped their hands with vessels of silver and gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with furniture."—1 *Esdras* i. 5, 6.

How beautiful and how affecting is the spectacle presented by the people of God, when delivered by Cyrus from the yoke of their oppressors after seventy years' captivity and suffering, even in the hour of their liberation, they forget all the concerns of this earth, and think only of rebuilding the temple of the Lord! The walls of Jerusalem must not be raised, nor the fields of their fathers sown, until the altar and the sanctuary are restored and solemnly consecrated. The house of the

* 2 *Cor.* ix. 3.

† "Their very deep poverty hath abounded unto the riches of their simplicity."—*Ibid.* viii. 2.

‡ "In much experience of tribulation they have abundance of joy."—*Ibid.*

God of Jacob will be the very first to rise from the ruins; and the tribes which have been plundered and impoverished so long, will find, even in their distress, the means of adorning it with splendour. In so holy an enterprise every one will sacrifice the little gold and silver which has been left him, the precious relics which escaped the rapacity of the conquerors, the best part of the flock which each one reserved for his support, and the modest furniture which was sufficient for his use. *Adjuverunt manus eorum in vasis argenteis et aureis, in substantia in jumentis, in supellectili.* Not content with the treasures which the King of Persia supplied for the erection of the sacred edifice, as the historian Josephus relates, and the restoration of the wealth which had been sacrilegiously plundered by Nebuchodonozor:* and the contributions which had been levied by a public edict,† the sacred narrative states that what the people *had offered on their own accord*,‡ amounted to forty-one thousand drachms of gold, with a proportionate number of pounds of silver; besides seven hundred garments for priests, and other offerings of great value.§ The very poorest undertook to give the third part of a sicle every year for the completion and maintenance of the temple,‖ and a liberal provision was made to supply the wants of all those who ministered therein, even *of the singing men and the porters.*¶ That people to whom their protracted calamities had taught the value of religion, exclaimed, "There shall henceforth be no deficiency in the service or in the ornament of the sanctuary. *The sanctified vessels shall be there, and the priests, and the singing men, and the porters, and the ministers.*** And no one shall ever accuse us that we will *forsake the house of our God.*"††

These details concern us also, my brethren. Are we not also escaping from a revolution which has been a second Babylonish captivity to us? Has not the land of Clovis, of Charlemagne, of St. Louis, served as a captive beneath the yoke of a few perverse and impious men, as Israel and Juda served beneath idolatrous tyrants? Have not chains, and exile, and death itself, been the portion of all that was great and illustrious amongst us? Our Church has arisen once more; but, alas! how destitute and how feeble is she! In the days of her former power she supported the indigent, she sustained the nation, and she saw a numerous and happy offspring who, year

* 1 *Esdras* i. 7-11.
† *Ibid.* 4.
‡ *Ibid.* 6.
§ 2 *Esdras* vii. 70-73.
‖ *Ibid.* x. 32.
¶ *Ibid.* xii. 46.
** *Ibid.* x. 39.
†† *Ibid.*

after year, filled up the ever-decaying ranks of the holy tribe, renewed her gladness, and maintained her power undecayed. She now sits down, plundered and clothed with mourning in the midst of ruins, to weep over her by-gone glory, and to tremble for the future; she sees her elders dying in poverty, her bravest champions prematurely sinking under the pressure of their labours, and she has not the means of sending others to supply such wasting ruin. The immense and ever-increasing void which has been created in the sanctuary threatens us with the entire and inevitable extinction of our priesthood, unless the zeal of the faithful be at length awakened to afford more efficacious means for its propagation and permanency. Oh, my Christian brethren! that Church which has brought you forth in Christ Jesus, which has nourished your childhood with the milk of her holiest doctrine, which daily bestows upon you all the graces and even the very blood of her Spouse—that Church of France implores your charity and compassion for herself, this day, and solicits your alms to save her from perishing. I solicit your charity on behalf of her who pleads before God, both by day and by night, for your salvation. And how confidently should I not advocate her cause! After having found your hearts so deeply affected by the wants of a distant Church at the farthest extremity of the world,* how can I fear that I shall find them less impressed by the urgent necessities of that Church which possesses such sacred claims upon your sympathy and affection! To advocate so precious an interest requires not the help of art. The view which I shall propose to you is as simple as the subject is important. It is to unfold the considerations which should induce you to relieve the necessities of your Church, from motives of duty as well as from those of interest, and that no assistance can be more necessary than what she demands at present for the education of those who are destined to perpetuate the priesthood amongst us. O, my God! endue me with persuasive and affecting words; and endue my hearers with docile minds and compassionate hearts! *Ave Maria, &c.*

I. The motive of duty which should induce you to assist your Church, in her present distress, includes an obligation of religion which binds you as Christians in general, and an obligation of justice which binds you as members of the Church of France in particular.

* The Church of Louisiana, on behalf of which the preceding sermon was preached, shortly before the present one.

First—you are bound by an obligation of religion as members of the universal Church of Christ.

Although Jesus Christ has been pleased not to exercise His dominion during the course of His mortal life here below, you are aware, my brethren, that He is the Sovereign Monarch and the undoubted Master of the universe. As God, He essentially possesses and governs all things; and as Man, He has received all things from his Father. He has been given *the gentiles for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession.** The Church is the spouse of this mighty King; hence the title of *mistress of the gentiles,*† which she bears in Holy Writ. The true mistress of a spiritual kingdom, she has not received the riches of this earth for her inheritance; but her Divine Spouse has not been unmindful of the wants of her pilgrimage; He has given her kings for her *nursing fathers,*‡ and made nations tributary to her. Hear how He speaks by anticipation through the words of Isaias. O thou whom seemed desolate and forsaken, how great shall be thy admiration and joy when the days of thy fertility and plenty shall have come.§ Thy sons shall come from afar, to lay their treasures at thy feet. *The children of strangers shall build up thy walls.*‖ The glory of Libanus shall come to thee; and gold, and silver, and brass shall adorn thy dwellings. *And kings shall now minister to thee.*¶ *Thou shalt suck the milk of the gentiles, and thou shalt be nursed with the breasts of kings; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer the mighty one of Jacob.*** *For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; and the gentiles shall be wasted with desolation.*†† In these beautiful expressions you must not only recognise a solemn promise made to the Church, but, moreover, an express injunction imposed on nations, under the most rigorous penalties, to provide for the necessities and the maintenance of her worship. And these promises must be fulfilled, even whilst evangelic poverty reigns amongst us. Hearken to Jesus Christ Himself; and the divine simplicity of His language will confirm all that has been advanced in the sublime imagery of Isaias. He has given His apostles the same prerogatives as the prophet points out; and He issues the same threats, or even more awful ones, against all who neglect to assist His Infant Church in the persons of

* *Ps.* ii. 8.
† *Lament.* i. 1.
‡ *Isaias* xlix. 23.
§ *Ibid.* xliv. 11.
‖ *Ibid.* lx. 10.
¶ *Ibid.*
** *Ibid.* 16.
†† *Ibid.* lx. 12.

these Apostles. *Into whatsoever house you enter, in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they have: for the labourer is worthy of his hire.** *And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Amen, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment than for that city.*† Must not this denunciation alarm you, my brethren? If, in these early days of Christianity—when the name of Jesus Christ had scarcely begun to be heard through the world—there was an obligation imposed upon those who heard His Divinity spoken of for the first time, to open their doors to the preachers of the Gospel, and to share with them out of the abundance of their houses, how can we question the far more strict obligation which binds a Christian nation to contribute a portion of its goods for the necessities of its Church and the preservation of its priesthood? If it be a crime equal to that of Sodom to have refused a passing assistance to a single minister of the Saviour's religion, what will it be to leave the youth of the sanctuary, the only hope of that holy religion, without the means of support, and through sordid avarice, to expose the entire sacred ministry, and Christianity itself along with it, to the danger of perishing in this kingdom? Oh, my dear friends, I tremble at the thought of that judgment which you shall have to undergo, not only if such a calamity should befall us, but if, through your fault, a single ecclesiastical vocation is stifled in its growth, and prevented from maintaining a full maturity. You know how rigorously the Supreme Judge will treat those upon the last day who shall neglect the wants of a single poor creature, even of the most abject and worthless of men, or of a little one at the mother's breast. He will tell them when pronouncing their sentence of eternal torments, that what they refused to the least of these little ones, they refused to Himself. *Quandiu non fecistis uni de minoribus his nec mihi fecistis.*‡ How severe, then, must be the judgment, and how awful the anathema, which he shall pronounce against you for having neglected, not an useless and ordinary child, but a child of benediction whom He had chosen to be the ornament of His house, the support and consolation of His Church, the Saviour of many thousand souls ransomed by His blood, but who, deprived of assistance, and encountering misery and want alone when entering upon His sacred career, has, therefore, failed to fulfil such a glorious destiny? "Behold

* *Luke* x. 7. † *Matt.* x. 15. ‡ *Matt.* xxv. 45.

that child," He will say to you, "I called him as I have called Samuel; it was intended that he also, like Samuel, should sanctify His people, and confound the worshippers of Baal—that, like Nathan, he should proclaim the truth to kings—that, like Paul, he should announce my name to unbelieving nations. Like Augustine, he may have defended the deposit of faith; like Ambrose, he may have opposed a barrier against injustice; like Borromeo, he may have revived the holy rules and vigour of ancient discipline; like Vincent of Paul, he may have alleviated every suffering, and consoled all the miserable; but, born in indigence, his earliest years had need of your support; I reserved for you the honour of opening to him the doors of the sanctuary by the exercise of your benevolence; and this you have refused to do; you have stifled in the cradle a priest, a pontiff, an apostle; you have plunged the Church, his mother, and My spouse, in mourning; you have most grievously insulted Me—Me, whose designs you have subverted—Me, whom you have deprived of a worthy representative, of a faithful minister, of numerous conquests which he may have gained in honour of My name, and of an immense accession of glory which I expected from his labours—Me, from whom you can only expect vengeance for him and vengeance for Myself. *Quamdiu non fecistis uni de minoribus his nec mihi fecistis.* O, how many good works have you prevented by refusing this solitary one! how many crimes have you allowed to be committed which this child would have prevented, if he were promoted to the service of the sanctuary! how many sinners would he have converted—sinners whom you have hurried down to the abyss! The iniquity of Sodom will not be more rigorously punished than yours. *Tolerabilius erit terræ Sodomorum et Gomorrhæorum quam illi civitati.* But, oh, great God! if you have been still more guilty—if you have abandoned the whole body of the youth who were destined, perhaps, to reform our age, to regenerate a whole nation, to restore it to the splendour of the ancient days, and to the fervour of the apostolic times—if you have thus been the cause of the irreparable ruin of morality, of the extinction of faith, of the abolition of our sacred worship, of the revolt and apostacy of a whole people, how awful must your punishment be, and what guilt can be compared with yours. *Tolerabilius erit terræ Sodomorum et Gomorrhæorum quam illi civitati.* It is, therefore, certain, my brethren, that in your capacity as Christians, you are bound by an indispensable obligation of religion to assist your Church, and that more particularly in the preservation and propagation of her priesthood.

Secondly—you are bound to assist her by an obligation of gratitude and justice, as members of the Church of France.

Oh, France! most illustrious nation of Europe! who, before the fatal period of your troubles, astonished the world by your power, excited its envy by your prosperity, dazzled it by the splendour of your arts and industry, delighted it by the elegance and refinement of your manners, extorted its admiration by the labours and discoveries of your learned men, by the talents and grand performances of your writers, by the renown of your great men in every department—who proudly displayed to the stranger and sojourner the order and the magnificence of your cities, the abundance and tranquillity of your rural districts—who made your victorious arms be dreaded far and near, and suffered your countless vessels, laden with the riches of every clime, to traverse the seas under the protection of a flag universally respected. Oh, France! so deservedly jealous of your glory, allow me to ask you, to whom have you been indebted for fourteen hundred years of so much prosperity and greatness? Open your immortal annals, and they will answer, for your sake, that you owe them all to your Church. And, my brethren, we must proclaim her titles to your gratitude, even now, when so many affect such marvellous ingratitude towards her. Remember the days of old. Your fathers, when they had scarce emerged from barbarism, owed their very civilization to religion, and learned everything from her ministers. From the time of Clovis to that of Charlemagne, and even long after, you behold St. Remi and his successors gradually subduing the ruggedness of these hardy warriors, moderating the wildness of their character, teaching them to recognise a power different from mere physical force, softening the asperity of revenge, appeasing intestine wars, and gradually establishing the blissful reign of order, of justice, and of every social virtue, upon the basis of Christian perfection; you behold the bodies of bishops united with the first French emperor of the West in establishing those celebrated capitularies which were our first laws, and furnishing us in their councils, with the model of our parliaments and national assemblies; you behold a modest religious, under the same prince, establishing our first schools, and laying even then, the deep foundations of those academies and universities which afterwards became so famous. Is it not notorious that it was the clergy, by clearing the neglected soil of France, and cutting down the forests which formerly covered it, gave the first lessons in agriculture to men who were only acquainted with the use of arms, inspired them with a relish for rural

labours, united them in peaceful communities, established them in those smiling plains which became enriched with harvests, and thus gave rise to most of our hamlets, and towns, and cities! It was the clergy who first taught the very mechanical arts and commerce. How deeply are not literature and science indebted to them! When barbarism and ignorance invaded every other place, literature and science found a sanctuary and a refuge in the churches and monasteries. It was there the precious monuments of sacred and profane antiquity were carefully preserved, reproduced, and multiplied with unwearied care and industry. Historical associations, traditions, and every other study would have perished beyond recovery, and nothing would have reached our days but for the exertions of the monastic orders and clergy. Amid the rudeness of these times, the clergy always possessed their learned men, their orators, their famous writers, whose works are read with admiration, even in our own days. They alone exercised the functions of the magistracy, transacted all affairs of importance, upheld social order, looked forward to the interests of future generations, and wrote the history of contemporary occurrences for their benefit. As we issue from the darkness of the middle ages, how great is the glory which your clergy have reflected upon the whole nation! how important is the part they have borne in the revival and advancement of literature and of fine arts! What splendid monuments, what useful institutions—temples, and schools, and hospitals—have been the work of their hands! Is it not to them you are indebted for those immense libraries where all the treasures of science are amassed? How numerous are the splendid productions with which they have adorned your literature! Tell me what glory do you possess in which the ecclesiastical order is not entitled to participate, with the solitary exception of military glory; and even your great generals, as well as your kings and princes, were educated by your priests. Tell me what benefit have you received which has not been conferred by these men, who have been, at the same time, the ministers of heaven and the benefactors of this earth. Who formed the minds and the hearts of your children? Who placed your universities in their flourishing condition? Who maintained a proper decorum of manners? Who arrested the ravages of guilt and error? Who consoled the ailing and relieved the poor? Who healed the wounds of the state in like manner? Remember Suger, Amboise, Richelieu, and Fleury, and tell me was the country ever assisted by more wise and prudent counsellors? Remember those ancient

assemblies of our provinces which, year after year, added something to the beauty and prosperity of France, which opened high-ways and canals, pierced the mountains, flung bridges across deep valleys, and tell me, were not the bishops who presided over these administrations, which have been so deservedly commended, the life and soul of these mighty undertakings? See them again in the assembly of the states-general, in which they formed the first order of the nation, and tell me have they ever proved themselves unworthy of the high rank in which they had been placed? and has any other order more effectually maintained the honour of your name, or displayed more talents, more knowledge, more ingenuity, more devotedness and courage, than they have shown? Follow them to the last of our great national assemblies, in which so many sacred laws and institutions, and privileges expired: and tell me could they possibly have buried themselves more gloriously beneath the ruins of religion.

My brethren, this is but a feeble outline of what your Church has been these fourteen hundred years; yet I have only referred to her more trivial claims upon your gratitude. There are others of a far higher order. Your souls regenerated by baptism—your minds enlightened by the preaching of the Gospel—your consciences purified in the life-giving laver of penance—your very bodies strengthened by the flesh of the Lamb of God—your marriages blessed—all the acts of life sanctified, and the agonies of death alleviated, and rendered glorious by the pledges of immortality; these are great and God-like favours which you can receive from her alone, and which she has never ceased to lavish upon yourselves and your fathers. How great, then, has been our injustice and ingratitude in having degraded, plundered, proscribed, and pursued her with fire and sword in the fury of our merciless resentment! Ah! well may she then have said in the words of her Divine Master to the Jews who were raging to destroy Him, *Many good works have I showed you; for which of those works do you stone Me?** "Is it because I have so largely contributed to your glory that you overwhelm me with insults? Is it because my treasures have ever been the patrimony of the poor that you violently wrest them from me? Is it because I have cultivated, adorned, and civilized your country that you refuse to afford me a shelter there? Is it because I have brought you forth to an immortal life, that you thirst for my blood, and anxiously desire my death? Oh! children of my affliction, whom I have borne in my womb, whom I have sup-

* *John* x. 32.

ported with so much love, whom I have supported and instructed with such solicitude and trouble, why should you repay your mother with hatred and contempt? *Filios enutrivi et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me.**

It is this atrocious injustice you are now called upon to repair, my brethren. I am well aware that you have not been its perpetrators—that you have not been the authors of this sacrilegious robbery, this cruel and bloody persecution. But will any of you presume to say that you have borne no part in the philosophy of that age, in that impious insanity which has been the real source of all our woes?—that you have not even involuntarily received some fragment of that enormous wreck? But, without pursuing this inquiry, what child can refuse to repair the injuries which his mother has suffered, even though he himself may have borne no share in their infliction? Hasten, then, my brethren, hasten to repair the calamities of the Church, your mother, not by restoring all that she has lost—for that would be impossible; and she does not require it—but rescue her from perishing, by supplying her with the means of producing new generations of Levites, and of perpetuating her blessings along with her priesthood. And that is what I term an obligation of gratitude and justice which you should fulfil towards the Church of France, as members of that Church.

You are bound to assist your Church in her necessities, not only by a motive of duty, whether of religion or of justice and gratitude, but also by a motive of interest, which is the noblest and the most sacred, as well as the dearest and most important of all interests.

If I were certain that there were none but pious and fervent Christians in this assembly, it would be sufficient to ask "Do you wish that our altars should fall, that Jesus Christ should quit our tabernacles, that our pulpits should be silent, and our temples deserted? Do you wish that the solemnities should cease in Sion, that the voice of prayer and the sound of the Divine hymns should no more be heard there; that there should no longer be a priest to pour the water of baptism upon the heads of your children, to instruct them in the principles of faith, to teach them to subdue their passions, and to serve the Lord? Do you wish to leave behind you a posterity without religion, without morality, without the hope of eternal salvation?" And this would be sufficient to induce every

* "I have brought up My children and exalted them, but they have despised Me."—*Isaias* i. 2.

faithful soul who sincerely loves Jesus Christ and His Church, who feels the value of Divine grace and of the heavenly inheritance, this would be sufficient to induce them to sustain every sacrifice in maintaining so sacred a cause. But even though there may be amongst my hearers some of those unfortunately indifferent men who have forgotten all they owe to God, and care little or nothing for the great concerns of eternity, I would assure them in like manner that the first of their temporal interests is to preserve religion and its ministers. If the Gospel, with its Divine morality, vanished from amongst us, what could preserve the union of families, or the order and harmony of society? What security could the husband have for the affection and fidelity of his wife, or the father for the love and obedience of his children, or the master for the attachment and integrity of his servants, or all classes and conditions of men for the good faith and sincerity which are indispensable in all the relations of life? I need not dwell upon truths which are evident and familiar to you all. But, my brethren, it is not less certain, and no less worthy of being impressed upon your minds, that, circumstanced as we are at present, you can neither preserve your property, nor your rank in society, nor your lives, nor social order, nor civilization itself, without religion and its ministers. You must be aware that we are surrounded by a multitude of men whom a ferocious impiety has inspired with a desire of anarchy and disaster—men who are impatient of the least restraint, and who are acquainted with no liberty except what revolt affords—that of robbery and murder. Their fury is at present restrained by various causes: but can we suppose that their criminal hopes are extinguished, that their projects are abandoned, that their leagues and combinations are dissolved? Do they not still retain their signs of recognition, the oaths which unite them, their subterranean assemblies, the leaders who direct them, and perhaps the time marked out for fresh seditions? If they do not dare to unfurl their standards, and to invite the people openly to the perpetration of all excesses, at least they exert themselves with a marvellous activity to corrupt the public mind by propagating the principles of atheism, by the circulation of these infamous works, in which obscenity and blasphemy vie for superiority with felony, with a certainty of triumphing sooner or later if they can only eradicate the religious feeling which lingers amongst a population that is still Christian. Under such circumstances the priesthood are the natural auxiliaries, the necessary allies of every power which preserves society. The priesthood, by preserving the faith always alive in the hearts of the

people, by reminding them that God has established a legitimate authority upon earth, and that He punishes a violation of its rights, by laying the seeds of these life-giving doctrines in the tender minds of childhood, by making a wayward youth bow down beneath the yoke of religion and the laws—are the support of public order, and the firmest pillars of the state. The zealous missionaries who pass through your towns and cities, preaching penance, attracting the sinner by the hope of pardon, moving the most obdurate consciences by the terrors of faith, dissipating factions and cabals, uniting all together at the foot of the cross, are armies which defend us no less effectually than our soldiers; and these temples where men forget their prejudices and passions, whilst the praises of the Lord are sung—where, at the sight of the altar, the tabernacle, and the Lamb which is slain, they feel transported to the abode of eternal peace, far away from the agitation and guilt of this world below—where they weep over their sins, and pray for their country's prosperity - these are citadels no less formidable to the enemy from within, than our most impregnable fortresses are to the enemy from without.

If we are not yet fully satisfied that the Church of France is the surest support of the state—that if the Church falls the state must fall along with it—the wicked at least are convinced of it, as their mode of acting unanswerably proves. When the masters and disciples of a seditious and anti-social philosophy conceived the design of overturning the state, they prepared the way for that mighty undertaking by fifty years' declamations against the Gospel and calumnies against the priesthood. When the hour of their fulfilment had arrived, the clergy were the first victims slaughtered; and, soon after, nobility, magistracy, government, and public order all sunk into one common grave. Look to other countries where the same sect has since tried the same bloody game, and see has not the same track been everywhere followed? Have not the sale of Church property and the proscription of the ministers of religion everywhere been the first signal of disorder, and the inevitable prelude to the subversion of empires? And even in our own days, do they who wish to sink us once more in anarchy and chaos, conceal the alarm which they feel at the return of the nation to the faith of its fathers? If they have been known to shudder at the mere sight of the army, have they not been heard to scream with alarm at the very name of the missionaries who preach the Gospel? Their sentiments, my brethren, should teach you what ought to be your own. Their hatred should be the measure of your love. What they require to pull

down, in order to destroy all things, you require to preserve and re-establish, in order to save all. Moreover, if our enemies have placed themselves under the protection of hell, to do the work of Satan, let us place ourselves more and more beneath the protection of heaven. Thence shall we derive power and victory; and, triumphing over every obstacle, and delivered from every alarm, we shall soon exclaim with the prophet, "Our enemies have relied upon their number and their courage, on their machinations and intrigues; and, taken in their own snares, and entangled in their own plots, they have fallen. *Hi in curribus, et hi in equis; ipsi obligati sunt et ceciderunt.** But we have invoked the name of the Lord, and sustained by His Omnipotent hand, we are arisen, and shall never more be fallen." *Nos autem in nomine Domini Dei nostri surreximus et erecti sumus.*†

II.—Having already submitted to you, my brethren, some of the motives which should induce you to assist your Church, it remains for me to satisfy you that the most necessary aid which it is in your power to afford, is that which she demands upon this day, for the education of the youthful clerics who are destined to perpetuate her priesthood.

To give you precise notions respecting the present condition of your clergy, I must refer you to the authenticated lists which are published every year. I unfold to you these tables, which are, alas, too true, and which I cannot look upon without tears. It is true that I see, with gratitude, new sees erected, ancient metropolitans restored, a few churches and seminaries rebuilt or repaired, and assistance granted to the most indigent amongst the ministry of the altar. I feel the value of these favours; but, alas! there is a gulf in the sanctuary which requires to be filled up; and it is widening in extent, and becoming more terrific day after day. I entreat you now, my brethren, to pay particular attention to these authentic statements.

My attention is first directed to a paragraph in which I find—"Number of priests required for the urgent wants of dioceses and parishes." Now what is the fatal number? How many priests are required for the extreme wants of the Church? My brethren, there are wanting for the strict and absolute necessities of religion in France, thirteen thousand, five hundred priests! You shudder; but wait a moment. "Average

* "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but they are bound and have fallen."—*Ps.* xix. 8, 9.

† "In the name of our God shall we be exalted; we are risen and set upright." *Ps.* xix. 6, 9.

number of priests whom death takes away every year—from eleven hundred, to thirteen hundred." Again, "Priests whom age and infirmity have rendered unfit for the performance of any ministerial duties, and who are at present merely an oppressive incumbrance on the clergy—two thousand three hundred and fifty." Moreover, amongst those who perform the functions of the ministry, how many old men are there who are scarce capable of even a little exertion, and whose failing strength is only sustained by an almost miraculous zeal, and by the efforts of a decaying ardour? Read, "Priests of sixty and seventy years, and upwards, who are engaged in active service—almost fourteen thousand!" After all these sad deductions, how many ministers are there still remaining in the vigour of age and health for the immense wants of Catholic France? "A little more than twenty thousand!" Twenty thousand priests for more than thirty-eight thousand parishes! Twenty-thousand priests for thirty millions of Christian people.*

Oh, Church of France, once so fair and fertile, who didst not only find means of abundantly providing for the spiritual wants of an immense kingdom in the numerous priestly tribe which drew subsistence from thy bosom, but didst also furnish, out of thy very abundance, priests, and pontiffs, and preachers to other nations less favoured by Heaven than thyself, and didst send forth colonies of apostles to the farthest limits of the earth, behold to what barrenness and distress thou art now reduced. Oh, new Sion, no less desolate than her whose miseries Jeremias describes; thy ways mourn; there are none that come to thy solemn feasts,† for they have lost their splendour and magnificence; priests are wanting to thy altars, and pastors to the sheep of thy flock; there is none to replace thousands of ministers, the glory of thy sanctuary, who have been cut down by the sword in the most cruel of all persecutions; thy little ones ask for the bread of their souls, and thou canst not break it to them, and still more wretched, they know not that they have a soul; they ask for nothing, and they are consigned to irremediable ruin.

* It is a gratifying fact, that although the number of the clergy in France still falls considerably short of what is considered necessary, they have been more than doubled within the few years since this sermon was preached. It appears, from the latest returns, that there are 41,300 priests in active service in France. The hierarchy conceive that 53,000 would be necessary for the adequate performance of the functions of the ministry in that country.

‡ *Lament.* i. 4.

Laying aside comparisons, let us revert to accurate calculations and authentic statements. Here we read, "Chapels permanently unoccupied, owing to the want of priests to minister in them—between three and four thousand." That is to say, my brethren, five or six thousand unions of parishes—almost the sixth part of France—remaining without pastors and without public worship! Six thousand parishes where the everlasting sacrifice is discontinued—where no vestige of religion remains, except an abandoned presbytery beside the ruins of a demolished temple—where children are born without a priest to baptize them—where the youth grow up without learning that there is a God—where marriages are performed without the nuptial benediction—where men live without faith or morals, with no restraint but the fear of punishment—where they die without the sacraments, without repentance, and without hope. Such is the state of this once most Christian land; and at what a time? When hell seems to have invented new devices to pervert the hearts of men—when it has multiplied every means of seduction and success—when it has its avowed partizans, its open agents, its enrolled soldiery, marshalled beneath its colours, and marching, with standards unfurled, to the conquest of the earth—when the chairs of pestilence and deceit, which have been everywhere erected, have their professors and their accredited and applauded teachers—when impiety has its doctors, materialism its demonstrators, and atheism its apostles—when every vice has its defender, and every deceitful and disastrous doctrine, its patron and preacher—when the church of Satan—foretold in Scripture—the *assembly of the malignant**—is visible to every eye—when it has its constitution and hierarchy, its laws and doctrine, its high priests and hierophants, its mysteries, its initiations, its symbols, its excommunications and thunders—when the spirit of wickedness, which reigns by depravity and unbelief, disdainfully consigns virtue and piety, and all that relates to the worship and adoration of the true God, to execration and derision—when those who legislate for the nation are not exempt from ridicule and insult, if they venture to repress the fury of sacrilege, and to declare that the house of God is equally inviolable with the habitation of the most obscure individual,† so intense is the determination of some that nothing should be free but guilt, nothing respected but vice, nothing protected

* *Ps.* xxv. 5.

† This occurred during the parliamentary debates regarding the law of sacrilege in 1825.

but scandals, nothing sacred but blasphemy and profanation. In such a state of affairs what can be effected by a few priests who are insufficient for the most pressing spiritual wants of the people—the administration of the sacraments, and the instruction of the young—and who, whilst they are wasted by fatigue, must endure the additional anguish of seeing a considerable portion of the flock abandoned, as if they lived in a heathen land?

It is, therefore, certain, that the only final hope of your Church, and, consequently, of your country, your families, and the social state of France, depends altogether upon the young ecclesiastics who are brought up beneath the shadow of the sanctuary, for whose support we solicit your assistance to-day. If, with the blessings of Heaven, and the help of your benevolence, as they grow up beneath the eyes of the virtuous and experienced guides to whom they have been confided, and become numerous enough to fill up the alarming chasm which has now been pointed out to you—so that they may not only supply pastors to the parishes which are at present forsaken, and laborious workmen in the rural districts, and enlightened directors of consciences, but also persuasive preachers of the Gospel, learned and skilful defenders of all the truths which have been so audaciously denied, pious and enlightened instructors of the rising generation, faithful guardians of the deposit of faith, and of all the precious traditions which we have received from our fathers, and zealous practical co-operators with the authority which guards the preservation of public morality—there can be no doubt but that all our wounds will be closed, and all our calamities repaired, that the Lord will perfect the work of His mercies for this nation, which has ever been so precious in His sight, and that your posterity, instructed by our transgressions, will be far more happy than our fathers have been.

But, my brethren, we must not flatter ourselves with being able to arrive, in a moment, at the complete reconstruction of our Church. Alas! even to preserve it in the condition which I have described—deplorable as that is—and to rescue it from a more rapid decay, the most zealous exertions of your charity will be required. It appears from the tables to which I have already referred, that to maintain even the present afflicting state of your clergy, without increase or diminution, the number of ecclesiastical students, now educated in public seminaries, or elsewhere, is at most, thirty-six thousand. This number would furnish no more than thirteen hundred priests in the year, for the whole of France—that is to say, almost as

many as death takes away every year. Out of these thirty-six thousand students, about six thousand are supported at the expense of the state, the departments, or the parishes; we may estimate at nineteen thousand, those who provide, either altogether, or in part, for their education—leaving a remainder of more than twenty thousand nurslings of the sanctuary—twenty thousand children precious to religion, but destitute of the gifts of fortune, who can only be preserved for their holy vocation, and the wants of future generations, by the liberality and charity of the faithful.

If the infidel were disposed to triumph at this fact, and to ask us with insulting ridicule, how it happens that scarcely any, except the poor, at present, join the ranks of the sacred host, we would answer, first, that we are not ashamed of that apparent humiliation; that it was thus the Church began; and that, after having had twelve poor fishermen of the lake of Genasareth as her first priests and bishops, she overcame the world, received kingdoms and empires within her pale, and, in fulfilment of the prophetic announcements, saw the wealthy, the powerful, the Cæsars themselves, bow down beneath her yoke, and humbly kiss where her footsteps trod; *Pulverem pedum eorum lingent.** That for the last eighteen hundred years she has been accustomed to every vicissitude; that whether wealthy or plundered, whether free or in chains, whether she dwells in the palace or the catacombs, whether seated beside the throne or ascending the scaffold, she fears neither indigence, nor ignominy, nor torture, because she is fated to come forth victorious out of every conflict, to outlive every persecutor, and to remain alone imperishable in the midst of a world whose figure passeth away, and whose hatred cannot affect her. If, therefore, at the present day, as well as at the time of St. Paul, she does not reckon amongst her ministers many of those who enjoy earthly prosperity, *Non multi potentes,*† nor many of those distinguished by an illustrious birth, *Non multi nobiles,*‡ she cares but little; she is the spouse of Him who is often pleased to choose what is most feeble, in order to break down all the power of His enemies, and what is most paltry and despicable in their eyes—what seems to them mere nothing—to annihilate the structure of their conceit, and to make all their proudest hopes vanish as smoke. *Et ignobilia mundi et contemptibilia elegit Deus, et ea quæ non sunt, ut ea*

* "And they shall lick up the dust of thy feet."—*Isaias* xlix. 23.
† 1 *Cor.* i. 26.
‡ *Ibid.*

*qua sunt destructa.** Give these little ones, who are now so humble and so poor, the means of support, they have the same nobility, the same treasures, the same arms as the Apostles; like them, they only require the cross of Jesus Christ; with that they will overcome the world, and prove once again that the weakness of God is stronger than all the power of man, and that the foolishness of God is wiser than all the wisdom and all the vain philosophy of man. *Quia quod stultum est Dei sapientius est hominibus; et quod infirmum est Dei fortius est hominibus.*†

Such would be our first reply. Our second would be addressed to you who are rich and great in this world. How comes it to pass that your children, who formerly crowded around the sanctuary, who almost burst open its gates, and scaled its steps with so much ardour, when wealth and splendour encircle the sacred dignities, are no longer ambitious of the honour of serving the Church since she has lost her earthly possessions, and has nothing now to distribute except the treasures of Heaven? How culpable has been your conduct if they have learned from you to regard nothing in a divine vocation except the hopes of fortune which it presents, and to value the priesthood of Jesus Christ only by the gold and silver which it promises? Ah! suffer me to remind you in all sincerity that if we have too often seen many an ancient and noble race extinguished, may not the reason be that they have become barren for religion? If some illustrious names, effaced or obscured by those which are more recent, have lost their lustre from day to day, may not the reason be that they shine no longer in the sacred archives of the house of God? May not the Almighty—who only regards His own designs—who has made all things for His only Son—may He not reject, as useless members those great ones who will not contribute to His glory? And may He not suffer the tree, which no longer bears fruit for His Church, to decay and wither in its very root? Would you desire, then, that your families should recover their original splendour? Renew their former alliance with the Church of Jesus Christ; let each of you solicit Heaven for one child more who may be called as Aaron was called to the august functions of the sanctuary, and who may adorn it

* "And the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are."—1 *Cor.* i. 28.

† "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."—*Ibid.* 25.

more by his virtues than by his birth and titles. In imitation of the mother of Samuel, consecrate that child of benediction to the altar: he will bring down all sorts of graces and blessings upon his parents, his brethren, and all his race; and this blessed branch will cause the stock from which he has drawn existence, to bloom again with renovated luxuriance and beauty.

Is this too much to ask? Then, assist with your wealth that Church whose wealth and magnificence have formerly contributed so largely to the glory of the name you bear. Assist her at least in supporting those children who may be substituted for your own in the service of the sanctuary. Assist the efforts of those who strive to reconstruct that edifice which was once so splendid—*Surrexerunt sacerdotes et levitæ ad ædificandum templum Domino*—that living temple whose architect is Christ. Let you who are *round about* the sanctuary, *help the hands* of those who undertake its toilsome work. *Universi qui erant in circuitu adjuvarent manus eorum.* If you present no *vessels of silver and gold* for its service—no *vessels unto honour, sanctified and profitable to the Lord, prepared unto every good work**—no vessels of election to impart God's treasures to his people—contribute at least a portion of your *goods* for their maintenance and support: retrench some share of your superfluities in equipage, in *furniture*, and other useless expenditure. *In substantiâ in jumentis, in supellectili.* Consecrate some portion of what you now devote to your indulgence, your sensuality, your pride, or your avarice, to the maintenance of God's worship. Thus shall you revive the glory of the "eldest daughter of the Church," and co-operate with Divine Providence in demonstrating to the unbeliever that our holy faith shall be ever sustained by the protecting care of Heaven: thus, you shall not only bestow countless blessings upon your nation at present, but you shall also impart them an hundredfold to future generations; thus shall your memory be blessed, and your alms declared amongst the saints for ever.† Justice, gratitude, and self-interest unite with religion to solicit your charity on behalf of the persecuted Church, which your fathers maintained in opulence and glory. From their honoured graves they call on you to be generous as they have been—to send forth those who may break the bread of life to the little ones who now supplicate for it in vain,‡ and preach Christ crucified to those amongst whom He is forgotten or disowned—to send forth those who may reclaim the sinner from his

* 2 *Tim.* ii. 21. † *Eccle.* xxi. 11. ‡ *Ibid.* x. 22.

wanderings, and console the just in his affliction and despondency. Those *men of renown** — *your fathers in their generation* †— seem to say to you, "Oh! you, who cherish our memory, listen to our most earnest prayer. Take compassion on our poor afflicted Church. Whilst we lived, our hearts and our treasures were ever open for her maintenance and support. We are now no longer able to support her; but we implore your generous sympathy on her behalf. If we could only make you sensible of the magnificent rewards which the Almighty has lavished upon us, you would set no limits to your liberality. Oh! how we now rejoice at having poured out alms into the hearts of the poor! how deplorable would be our lot if the voice of our alms giving had not long since pierced the heavens, and obtained for us those extraordinary and efficacious graces which sanctified our souls, effaced all their stains, and qualified them to appear before the immortal assembly of the just." My brethren, I leave you with the impression which their words, and still more, their examples, must make upon your hearts. As they, in common with all mankind, knew not the day nor the hour when death would take them unawares, they resolved that their lives should be sanctified by acts of charity and benevolence. Imitate their examples. Assist Jesus Christ, your Saviour, and your future Judge—assist Him, in the person of His well-beloved spouse, as you would wished to have assisted Him if you were to be summoned this very night at His awful tribunal where charity, which *covereth a multitude of sins*.‡ may obtain for you a judgment of mercy—which is a blessing I sincerely wish you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! *Amen.*

* *Eccle.* x. 22. † *Ibid.* ‡1 *Peter* iv. 8.

SERMONS AGAINST INFIDELITY.

"Be not faithless, but believing."—*John* xx. 27.

THE last century, my brethren, has witnessed the origin of that sect of self-styled sages who, under the audacious name of Infidels, have unfurled their standard against Christ—who ridicule His mysteries, His maxims, His miracles, His divinity—who regard the worship which is paid to Him as superstition, zeal for His glory as fanaticism, and obedience to His laws as a dastardly and degrading servitude. Alas! when I contemplate this new sect, which surpasses all others in wickedness—a sect whose distinctive character is not the rejection of any particular error, or the profession of any particular truth—whose only belief is an universal contempt for all religion, for all authority, for every law of duty; when I see it increasing and extending with an alarming rapidity hurrying on every age, and condition, and people in its revolt—I am filled with terror; when I behold such an exact fulfilment of our ancient oracles, I tremble lest we may have reached the period of that great apostacy foretold in the sacred Scriptures,* lest the days which immediately precede the final catastrophe of the universe may be at hand; when, according to the prediction of our Saviour and His Apostles, faith will be almost extinct upon earth;† when men in the intoxication of impiety and pride, insolently lift themselves up above all that bears the name of God, and above all that generations have worshipped. *Extollitur supra omne quod dicitur Deus aut quod colitur.*‡ When the final consummation shall arrive of the work of that man of sin, whom the Lord, at His last coming, *shall kill with the spirit of His mouth.*§

Assailed as we are by the presence of such multiplied calamities, shall we rest contented with merely deploring

* 2 *Thess.* ii. 3.

† "But yet the Son of man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth."—*Luke* xviii. 8.

‡ "Who is lifted up above all that is called God or worshipped."—2 *Thess.* ii. 4.

§ 2 *Thess.* ii. 8.

them? No, my brethren: we must raise our voice, as the duties of our ministry require, and attack this proud sect with a strength proportioned to its increased power at the present day. To make infidelity odious, it is barely necessary to divest it of the specious exterior in which it is equipped, and to display it in all its native deformity. The infidel glories chiefly in three things; he maintains that he alone is wise, that he alone is good, that he alone is happy—that he is wise, because, according to his own assertion, he has trampled upon every prejudice; that he alone is good, because he abhors all hypocrisy, and all that he designates as the excess and frenzy of fanaticism; that he is happy, both because he lives without obligation or restraint, and because he is freed from the terrors of the future. But it is easy to confound him upon these three heads, and to prove that he is, at the same time, foolish, criminal, and unfortunate: so that reason, conscience, and self-interest combine to prohibit us from hearing or following him. In three words, then, THE FOLLY OF THE INFIDEL—THE GUILT OF THE INFIDEL—THE MISERY OF THE INFIDEL—will form in turn, the subject of three discourses, to which I shall request your attention, in succession. Let us dwell upon the first of these reflections to-day.

SERMON THE FIRST.

FOLLY OF THE INFIDEL.

INFIDELITY, my brethren, would be the object of universal contempt, if it did not impose upon a frivolous world, by an unjustifiable assumption of wisdom. In the excess of its pride, it has assumed to itself the title of philosophy, and claimed the privilege of dictating its lessons, as if they were oracles, to kings and people. If we believe its assertions, mankind were yet in a state of childhood, before it had undertaken to instruct them; error, prejudice, superstition, and ignorance bore universal dominion: it rekindled the torch of reason which had been obscured in darkness, and was the first to exhibit the unknown truth to mortals. It is this groundless and intolerable assumption I undertake to confound this day; and because the infidel arrogates to himself the character of strength of mind and looks with disdainful pity upon those who hold the same faith as their fathers, as if they were only men of simple and vulgar intellects, I propose to show him that

there is no so feeble or short-sighted intellect, no really senseless being, except the man who does not believe; and, without adverting to the other reproaches, which I shall urge against it elsewhere, that infidelity is a doctrine the most untenable in the eyes of reason, of any that ever existed, and that, from its extravagance, it is the most deserving of universal ridicule. In a word, THE FOLLY OF THE INFIDEL is the subject of the present discourse, and the plan of it will be found obvious and easy from the natural course of the arguments and proofs which will be employed, without any previous announcement of the course which will be pursued in these.

But why should we undertake to assail infidelity in presence of an auditory who are blessed with the gift of faith? Because it has pitched its camp in the midst of us—because it surrounds us, and presses us from every side—because no asylum can shelter us from its envenomed darts; there is scarce a society or a family to which it does not send forth its spies, scarce a book which does not serve to communicate its deadly poison. It is, therefore, the duty of all to fortify themselves against it, and to look for arms to conquer such a dangerous foe. It is in sacred instruction you will find those arms which are so necessary. Attend to this instruction now. O Lord! Thy cause is at issue; impart to Thy word victorious energy, that, to use the words of St. Paul, all the fortifications of error may fall before it, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God may be pulled down.* *Ave Maria, &c.*

The infidel is one who rejects religion, either because he doubts its truth, or because he is convinced of its falsehood. Now, in either case, his unbelief, so far from being a proof of wisdom, of strength of mind, or of superior enlightenment, is, to speak properly, an undoubted and egregious folly. For, let us suppose, in the first place, that the infidel merely doubts the truth of religion. "Oh!" I would say to him, "in that supposition how great madness is yours! What! you doubt; that is to say, you know not whether religion be true or false; and in that state of uncertainty, you embrace the cause of infidelity, a cause in which, if religion be true, your perdition is inevitable: for, if it be true, there exists a God of wrath and justice, into whose hands you must sooner or later fall; you have an immortal soul, which must be either saved or lost; Jesus Christ is the Son of the Almighty, and the only Mediator through whom you can obtain mercy: the Gospel is the Divine

*2 *Cor.* x. 4, 5.

law given to men, according to which they must be judged; hell will be the portion of those who shall refuse to believe its doctrines. Nothing can be more certain than all this, if religion be not a fable. And you who dare not affirm that it is—you who are in a simple doubt—without further investigation, bid defiance to that God, hazard the eternal destiny of that soul, reject that only Mediator, despise that Gospel, and hasten onwards towards that hell. Can there be a more strange infatuation? What opinion would you form of the man who would observe a similar mode of action in matters of far less importance, and in dangers of infinitely less moment? who, in a law-suit, for instance, where his property, his character, and his life, may be involved, would feel a glory and a pride in abandoning all to chance?—who would merely ridicule these dangers which threaten him, however extreme and imminent they may be, and would contemptuously reject every means within his reach of protecting himself from them? Would you not say that he lost his reason? And do you conceive yourself to be less insane—you who recklessly precipitate yourself into the midst of dangers and calamities, in comparison with which those to which I have alluded are as nothing? For, it is not a perishable fortune, or this worldly honour, which is only a vapour, nor this uncertain life, of which you may be deprived at any moment, that is in danger, but your entire being, and everything else in relation to you—your body, your soul, all your happiness, and all your hopes—your very eternity. And yet you do not shudder at all this: nay, you even ridicule it; and, as if the most indifferent concern, or the interests of another were alone involved, you coldly amuse yourself with insipid jest upon that alternative, that dreadful alternative, to which you are reduced, and upon that awful and mysterious future, the mere thoughts of which ought to freeze your heart with terror. But, perhaps, you will condescend to tell us what new discovery have you made? Are you certain that every thing must end with death; or, if the more noble portion of your being is destined to survive, do you know what must befal it? "I know not," you reply, "and I make no inquiry upon the subject; to be uneasy about such concerns is what I call superstition and weakness—to disregard and doubt them is philosophy and strength of mind." Ah! what is all this but an excess of stupidity? Who, my brethren, could patiently endure the senseless arrogance of those men, who style themselves wise for no other reason than because they fling themselves, with eyes blindfolded, into the depths of an abyss; who give

the title of philosophy to their conceited ignorance of themselves, of their nature, of their origin, of the destiny which awaits them, and the means which they ought to employ in order to avoid an unlimited and never-ending woe; who desire that the curiosity of man should be indulged in everything else—in observing the stars of the firmament, in reckoning the insects and plants beneath his feet, in studying the history of those nations which pass away so rapidly from off this earth—but are unwilling to learn whether there be a God, or what the conditions are upon which He has given us existence or what He reserves beyond the grave for those who obey Him and for those who insult Him. If their doubt upon such important and awful questions were involuntary—if they deplored it—if they were ashamed of it, as they ought to be—if they made every effort to escape from it—and if, despite their study and investigation, that truth, which to others is so evident, always remained concealed from their eyes—though we should feel astonished at their blindness, we would, nevertheless, consider them to be deserving of some indulgence. If, at least, in a matter of doubt, they choose the safer side, if they respected those laws whose violation may be attended with such direful consequences to themselves, we should commend their prudence in such a case; but to indulge a complacency in that doubt—to feel a pride in it—to glory in it, as if it gave them a privilege to choose the alternative which is most dangerous—to live as if it had been demonstrated to them that there was no future state for men—to lull themselves into a voluntary sleep, out of which they may never awake unless in the lowest depths of hell—to make a jest of their going on undisturbed, as they express it—to encounter the great PERHAPS—this is an extravagance and a madness, which, in any other matter would be regarded as the certain indication of an insane mind. It must, therefore, be admitted, in the first place, that to embrace unbelief doubtingly is an excess of foolishness.

Now, if this be true, have I not already convicted all infidels of downright insanity? To speak seriously, and in good earnest, is there anyone who is qualified to go beyond a doubt, capable of finding a satisfactory and convincing argument against religion, the truth of which shines in the midst of the universe with a splendour as dazzling and undefiled as the sun in the midst of the firmament? Oh! senseless men! you may raise up around you clouds of dust, which darken in your eyes the brightness of the day, but you cannot extinguish that torch which the hands of God have enkindled above your

heads. *Nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.** When you reject religion, you fear, in spite of yourself, that it must be true, because you cannot prove the falsehood of a religion which bears, as it were, upon its countenance manifest signs of its Divinity.

But let us listen to this audacious infidel, who raises his voice, and says to us—"For my part, I entertain no doubts whatsoever; I look upon it as a certain truth that religion is a fable: I defy its threats without any fear, and I release myself from the obligation of its laws without any scruple." Let us listen to him, my brethren; let us even go farther, let us admit for a moment, contrary to all probability, that his conviction is as firm, and his security as great as he pretends; and we will prove to him that his folly is much more astonishing on that account, and that the infidel who does not doubt is even more extravagant and more blind than the infidel who doubts. Whence does he derive that conviction which is so profound and unshaken? Is it the result of mature examination, of serious study? Does he reject the faith of his fathers, the faith of all ages, with so much assurance and contempt, whilst, at the same time, he does not give himself the trouble of investigating and knowing it? In the latter case, his insanity would be evident, for, I ask you, what can be more strongly opposed to reason than to pronounce so decretorially upon a subject about which we know nothing, in a case where contempt is so dangerous, and to boast of having attained to certainty when we are in want even of the knowledge which is necessary to entitle us to doubt? Now, I venture to affirm, without fear of contradiction, that such is the madness of all the infidels of the present time who are so sarcastic and dogmatical. I do not except a single one of them—either of those who write against our mysteries, or those who indulge in such profane sarcasms in worldly societies. Whatever amount of learning some of them may possess in other respects, upon the subject of religion they know nothing: they have forgotten the elements of Christianity, which was the subject of the instruction of their youth; they have not read the defenders of our faith; they are more familiar with the Alcoran of Mahomet, and the reveries of paganism, than with the morality and doctrines of the Gospel; they confidently receive the certainty and the imaginary evidence of these, and blaspheme what they are totally ignorant of: for blasphemy is the habit and fashion of the age. Hence

* "There is no one that can hide himself from his heat."—*Ps.* xviii. 7.

the scathing declaration which one of their most celebrated writers addressed to them a few years since, when he deserted their banner, to rank himself beneath that of Christ:—"I HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO BELIEVE, BECAUSE I HAVE EXAMINED; IF YOU ALSO EXAMINE, YOU WILL BELIEVE AS I DO." What reply have they been able to make him? Oh! if there be any one of these infatuated men in this assembly, I would ask him what does he know about our belief, our arguments, or the sacred objects of our faith, which he so audaciously treats as childish and chimerical. If I examine him on any point of our doctrine, will he be able to answer my questions? Will he not feel himself compelled to acknowledge, to his shame, that he is even unacquainted with the rudiments of that Christianity which is so much entitled to our veneration, but which he has the hardihood to insult on all occasions? And yet, these are the men who are so certain that they are not mistaken; these are the men who do not even doubt; whilst the far more enlightened infidels of the last century—the founders and the Coryphæi of that impious sect—have lived in a state of cruel perplexity, and died amid terrors which they were unable to conceal. You may designate this unaccountable assurance by whatever name you please; for my part, I must express myself with all freedom, and I can believe it to be nothing else but an excess of stupidity which fills me with astonishment.

But, methinks I hear our false sages exclaim, "Christian preacher, you calumniate us. We have shaken off the yoke of faith, not blindly and without due investigation, but after having studied, reflected, collated, and thoroughly investigated every point; after having clearly seen the illusion of your doctrines, we have abandoned them; and our conviction is unshaken, because it is founded, not upon thoughtlessness and ignorance, but upon solid arguments and undoubted facts." Here, then, is an infidelity of a learned and thoughtful character. Now, even admitting that all their assertions are correct, we shall consider whether the conduct of those who act in the manner which they describe is less foolish than that of the others. It is now, my brethren, that the most serious discussion is about to engage our attention, and I expect a closer attention on your part, for I am about to enter plainly into the most important question that can occupy the human mind—to expose to your view, as it were, the foundations of Christianity upon one side, and those of infidelity upon the other—to lead you to examine them along with me, and then to leave it to yourselves entirely to determine whether it is even possible for

any one in his senses, after having examined and compared them, to persuade himself sincerely that error is on the side of religion, and truth on that of its adversaries. I shall advance nothing but what is clear and manifest—nothing but what I am satisfied is beyond all controversy.

The foundations of every doctrine are, either authorities which oblige reason to yield its assent and submission to whatever they testify, or arguments which satisfy and convince it. Hence, in order to decide between religion and infidelity, we have only to weigh the authorities and arguments which are advanced on each side, and then examine to what side the balance preponderates. This is what we shall now do; and I expect that I shall soon persuade the most prejudiced minds to admit—first, that the authorities which are adduced in favour of religion are weighty, impressive, and irrefragable authorities, whilst the authorities which are adduced in opposition to it are frivolous, despicable, and of no force whatsoever; and, secondly, that the arguments by which religion is supported are solid, convincing, and peremptory proofs, whilst those imaginary arguments by which infidelity strives to maintain its cause are nothing but paltry quibbles and clumsy sophisms. If I demonstrate these two propositions with undoubted evidence, what must we think of the wisdom and learning of those who boast that they have been persuaded into unbelief by study and reflection?

In the first place, then, the authorities which religion adduces in her favour are weighty, impressive, and irrefragable. Consider first the authority of her books. Produce those venerable writings of the Old and New Testament, which are known throughout the world by the title of the Sacred Scriptures, and which exhibit nothing inconsistent with the dignity of such a title. How great is the authority of the Old Testament—that book which is many ages more ancient than any other record—which, so far from resembling a rude misshapen essay, surpasses the most finished productions of man's intellect, in every kind of beauty and perfection, as far as the heavens are above the earth! What superhuman poetry and eloquence—what profound wisdom—what treasures of wisdom and knowledge may be found through all its pages! Within them are contained the origin of the world, and of all mankind, the beginnings of every people, the foundation of all histories, the true version of all these fables which compose the antiquities of nations; within them may be found all natural and supernatural, all Divine and human sciences, as in their source. And this book

which treats upon all these subjects, which asserts an infallibility in every particular, has been exposed to the contradictions of men for the last three thousand years, whilst, even to the present hour, it has been found impossible to detect a single error, or even the most trifling oversight in any one particular. How often, within the course of ages, have the imaginary calculations, and investigations, and discoveries of philosophers been shivered and broken against its impregnable basis? And even in our own days have not all the sciences, which an audacious philosophy had arrayed against her, been compelled, after a revolt which has been most strongly characterized by tumult and proud defiance, to fall prostrate, at length, before the vainly contested oracles of Moses?

What shall I say, in the second place, of the New Testament and the holy Gospel, when even our most celebrated infidels find it to contain, as they themselves admit, "a majesty which fills them with awe, and a sanctity which affects their heart in spite of themselves;" when they are forced to admit that "such a work could not be the work of human hands; and that it is characterized by marks of truth which are so great, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor of it would be more astonishing than the hero." The first authority, then, in favour of religion, is the authority of her books.

The second authority which she adduces in her favour, is that of her great men. Endeavour to find, if you can, in profane history a just and wise man who can bear a comparison with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—a hero who equals Josue, Gideon, or Judas Macchabeus—a legislator as great as Moses—a magistrate like Samuel—kings, either in war or peace, who could be classed with Solomon and David—pontiffs whom any one could have the temerity to place on a level with Aaron, Phineas, and Onias,—or interpreters of the divine will like Elias, Eliseus, Jeremias, and Daniel—not to mention the names of all the patriarchs, of all the prophets, of so many other extraordinary personages, both of the Old and New Testament, with whom we can find no one that could be compared in the annals of nations, or in the fictions of poets. These are the great men of religion.

But, above all, what a man has been her adorable founder—whom impiety alone could dare to regard as a mere mortal—whom, even in the midst of all its blasphemies, it admits to be at least, the most holy, the most perfect, the most enlightened of all mankind—in whose presence it sometimes falls prostrate

with the rest of mankind to adore him, exclaiming that "if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."

The third weighty and impressive authority in favour of religion is that of the first preachers and Apostles—men who deserve our admiration, no less by the simplicity and ingenuousness of their character, than by the intrepidity of their courage, the sublimity of their doctrine, the sanctity of their lives, their miracles, and the conquest of an idolatrous world, which they gained over from the most monstrous superstitions to the practice of every virtue, and the worship of the only true God.

The fourth authority in favour of religion is that of her doctors—of the Ambroses, the Augustines, the Basils, the Chrysostoms—of that almost countless multitude of great writers, of eloquent orators, of sages and saints, who, although separated by time and place, have everywhere taught her doctrines with an astonishing uniformity, and defended her against every adversary with all the weapons of argument, of learning, and of talents; and shed no less lustre upon her name, by the integrity and elevation of their character, and the innocence and gravity of their demeanour, than by their sublime talents and immortal productions.

The authority of her witnesses—that is to say, of many millions of martyrs who, in every part of the earth—in the East, in the West, in Africa, in the old and new world—have shed their blood, and suffered the most cruel torments, to attest the truth of her doctrines, and maintain the integrity of her faith.

The authority of her disciples—of those whom she has converted; that is to say, my brethren, of the whole civilized world which, after a resistance of three centuries, overcome at length by the evidence of facts, by the striking manifestation of a supernatural and divine agency, have abandoned the most inveterate prejudices and the most cherished passions, to embrace a religion which alarms nature, by the austerity of its discipline, and astonishes reason by the incomprehensibility of its mysteries.

The authority of her visible tribunal—of the entire Church teaching—that mistress of truth, which alone and above all others in the whole universe, can presume to style herself infallible, because she alone has remained invariable in doctrine whilst so many other changes have occurred around her—because she alone, although surrounded by so many errors,

can defy her enemies to show in what she has ever erred. *Quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato?**

Finally, the authority of time and duration; that is to say—and mark it well—the authority of all time and of the unbroken course of ages—of the four thousand years which have preceded the coming of Jesus Christ upon earth, during which He has been constantly foretold and expected, as well as of the eighteen hundred years which have elapsed since His birth, during which He has never ceased to be acknowledged and adored, so that from the fall of our first parents to our own days, it is impossible to point out a single day when Christianity has not existed.

And if, amidst this mass of ages, we are allowed to point out one in particular which was an epoch of glory for modern Europe, we may also adduce the authority of that ever-memorable age of the great Conde, of Turenne, Cobert, Lamoignon, Bossuet, Fenelon, Pascal, Mallebranche, Racine, Corneille, Newton, Leibnitz, who were great men and superior intellects in every department—an age upon which science, literature, and the arts, shed a lustre, which has never since been equalled—an age when religion was the object of the thoughts as well as of the homage of every one—when it was studied, discussed, investigated—when to disbelieve it was generally regarded as nothing short of insanity.

What a mass of authorities are these, my brethren. If they are not weighty, impressive, and irrefragable, tell me where shall we find any that are so?

But let us now examine the authorities which infidelity exhibits in opposition to us. I have already stated, in three words, that they are frivolous, despicable, and of no force whatsoever. It will be easy to prove the correctness of these expressions.

First—they are frivolous authorities. We cannot refrain from blushing at the silliness of unbelief, when it trumpets forth the names of its principal leaders, and the writers in which it glories. What were these boasted oracles in reality? It is said that they were men of wit. Yes; they were men of frivolous, jesting, volatile dispositions—men of letters, poets, romancists, inventors of systems and theories which were overturned and abandoned almost as soon as they were advanced—men who were characterized by extravagant declamation, by impudent sophistry, and, above all, by merciless taunts—whose

* "Which of you shall convict me of sin?"—*John* viii. 46.

most ordinary instruments were ridicule and sarcasm, and whose greatest glory was to make every thing the subject of their jests, and to laugh to scorn all that was most sacred and revered in the estimation of mankind. Can there be more frivolous authorities in the affair of religion?

Secondly—they are despicable authorities. We can despise nothing if we do not despise imposture, obscenity, and hypocrisy; and are not such the three leading characteristics of those writers of whom we speak? What other sect has ever affected so much aversion and contempt for truth? Read those impious books which they have scattered so profusely throughout Europe, and you will find falsehood displayed in them at every page. Do they advance a fact? it is forged;—a date? it is false;—a text? it is garbled and perverted. Read their confidential and authenticated correspondence, which has been published by their own disciples, and you will see that they construct falsehood and calumny into a science and a system; that they impart the lessons of such vices to each other; and that they rest every hope of success upon the propagation of such detestable doctrines. Must I adduce instances in support of this assertion? I feel ashamed to do so. But proofs may be required. We shall direct your attention to one proposition which is literally extracted from amidst a thousand others out of the most celebrated portion of their correspondence, and addressed, in the form of a maxim and a precept, by the Socrates of Ferney to one of his disciples. Listen to it, my brethren, and do not blame me when I am driven to the painful necessity of making such sentiments heard from the pulpit. I quote the words with a firm conviction that they can inspire you with no other feelings save those of horror. "Falsehood," says the patriarch of our pretended philosophy, "is a very good thing when it effects a useful purpose. We should tell lies, not with timidity, not upon rare occasions, but we should tell them courageously and upon all occasions. Be liars, my friends—be liars in good earnest." I believe this doctrine is neither equivocal nor incomplete. We know too well that the practice of the disciples has always been in conformity with the precepts of their master; and of that fact we can find abundant proofs in those myriads of palpable falsehoods and philosophical calumnies which are circulated day after day, with unwearied zeal, to promote their useful ends. Thus far for their character of imposture. But how shall I speak of their character of obscenity? Have I not reason to apprehend the danger of offending modesty by the bare mention of these

poems, these romances, these stories of pretended morality? of these treatises on the usages of society, of these shameless confessions which will crush them beneath the burden of an eternal disgrace, and compel them to descend from the rank of philosophers and sages to that of vile and infamous corrupters of public morality. Thus far for their character of obscenity. You may feel astonished, perhaps, that I should add the character of hypocrisy to the others. Have you then forgotten all those cowardly and continual denials of their sentiments and writings—all those reiterated and false protestations of attachment and reverence for that religion which they had sworn to destroy—and, finally, (as I must mention it—although I shudder at the thought of such abominations,) those professions of faith, those communions of Ferney, and those abominable expressions—"We should communicate; we must become hypocrites in order that we may the more effectually destroy superstition;" must you not declare, my brethren, that such men are despicable authorities?

Thirdly—they are authorities which are of no force whatsoever—which are absolutely null. What can be a greater nullity than what not only does not exist but what, if it did exist, must cause its own destruction? In order that a sect should possess any authority, must it not possess some doctrine? But the infidel sect have no doctrine whatsoever. I defy them to point out any one opinion upon which the masters and their disciples are agreed, or to adduce a single admitted and authorized article of their creed. I will go farther. I defy them to name any two men who agree amongst themselves, so that one of them will be found to assert upon a multitude of points precisely the reverse of what the other maintains. This is not all. I defy them to tell me the name of any man who agrees with himself—any man who does not refute in one book what he had sought to establish in another, and often in the following chapter what he had advanced in the preceding one. These philosophers are of a Protean character, and their productions are a chaos of contradictions. Open a certain page, and you will find the author to be a deist; open another, and you will find him to be an atheist; a little farther on, he is a Sceptic; here, you will find him a follower of Confucius or Mahomet; there, an adorer of idols; and somewhere else, he is a Christian; here, he is the energetic panegyrist of virtue; there, the violent defender of every vice; it is the same person all through; and he is, by turns, the advocate of humanity as well as of murder and suicide, the friend of

law and order, and the advocate of rebellion and anarchy, just as it suits his purpose. Tell me then what they teach and what they mean, before you speak to me of their authority; and if it be evident that they have no doctrine to profess, and no principle to maintain, you must admit that their authority is null, and that it weighs absolutely nothing in the scale of reason. How much the more readily would you not admit that their authority is of no weight, if I showed you the most enlightened and the most praiseworthy among them—some on their death-beds and others in the vigour of life and health, abjuring and detesting their senseless philosophy; condemning and anathematizing their own writings; calling heaven to witness that they never believed the monstrous opinions which they professed, and that it was vanity alone sustained them in the profession of infidelity against the dictates of conscience; and at length imploring, even with tears, the forgiveness and the help of that religion which they had so audaciously insulted! No; there never were authorities so frivolous and so null as the authorities which this sect advances in its support; and we have most convincing reasons to conclude that to prefer them to the grave and imposing authorities which we have advanced in support of religion is the height of bad faith and downright insanity.

What answer can the infidel make to this? That he abandons authorities and relies entirely on proofs. But even here a greater confusion awaits him; for I will follow him into this last refuge, and force him to admit that the arguments by which religion is supported, are solid, convincing, and peremptory proofs, whilst those by which infidelity is supported are nothing more than paltry quibbles and clumsy sophisms.

Amongst the multitudinous proofs which establish the divinity of the Christian religion beyond all question, I shall now confine myself to the leading ones, which I shall briefly explain. These are four—prophecies, miracles, the sublimity of its doctrines, and the purity of its morality.

First—prophecies. A great event, the like of which has never been recorded before or since in the annals of the world—an event which was destined to effect a complete revolution in the world—is solemnly proclaimed to the first authors of the human race four thousand years before that event occurred. The predictions which relate to this miraculous event are increased in number and more clearly explained and unfolded as ages succeed each other. The name of the Messiah or Christ, and the prodigies which He is destined to accomplish, resound

through the universe many centuries before He appears. Every particular respecting Him—even the minutest circumstances which regard Him—even the most remote and most extraordinary effects of His coming are all pointed out with a precision of language and a minuteness of detail which seem to be the attributes of historians rather than of prophets. The time and place at which He was destined to be born of a virgin—the royal race from which He was to be descended—the most particular events of His life—the sorrows and ignominy of His death—the triumph of His glorious resurrection—the dispersion of the Jewish people through every country, and their miraculous preservation in the midst of every other people, whilst they can never be united and never destroyed—the conversion of an idolatrous world—the foundation of an imperishable church and a spiritual kingdom which shall extend to the utmost limits of the earth—all these have been foreseen and predicted, and they have all been fulfilled, even in the minutest particulars, by means which are equally incomprehensible, as the events which they were destined to produce; and the whole world, for more than eighteen hundred years, has been a witness to the literal fulfilment of these ancient and amazing oracles. As it is certain, then, that the eye of God alone can penetrate so far into the distant future, and unveil the profound designs which He resolves to perform upon a future day, thousands of years before that day arrives, we must conclude that a religion which is thus foretold is a divine religion. And this is our first proof.

Secondly—miracles. Christ, who has been foretold as the Son of the Almighty, and as God Himself, has performed works which Omnipotence could alone accomplish. Every step which He trod is marked by some prodigy. With a word, He gives sight to those who were born blind, hearing to the deaf, motion to the paralytic, and life to those who had lain dead for four days. His enraged enemies have been witnesses of these miracles, and they have never dared to deny them. His Apostles worked similar prodigies throughout all the nations of the earth. Rome and Athens, as well as Judea, are fixed in amazement; and the Academy and the Portico as well as the Synagogue are filled with dismay. The Gentiles are converted in crowds, and readily suffer death for a religion which imparts so much power to its ministers. The very unbelievers and persecutors—the priests and the philosophers of paganism, as well as the obstinate Jews—are all unanimous in acknowledging the reality of miracles which confound them, and are

unable to devise any other means of explaining them away, except the foolish one of ascribing them to magic—so undeniable have been the facts, and so impossible has been all doubt respecting them. As it is the attribute of God alone then to command nature and to change its laws according as He pleaseth, we must conclude that a religion whose Author has proved Himself to be the Author of nature, is a divine religion. And this is our second proof.

Thirdly—the sublimity of its doctrines. Whilst all the nations of the earth have been buried in the thickest darkness—whilst their religious belief has been nothing more than a monstrous heap of gross superstitions, absurd fables, and impure rites—whilst the most boasted sages have gone astray with the crowd—what is that religion which suddenly diffused a light through the whole world; which taught all truth without the least admixture of error; which made all those gods of clay, and wood, and metal, that had been the objects of the world's adoration, fall down with their altars; and which proclaims the unity of an incorporeal, infinite, eternal, omnipotent God, who has made all that now exists to arise out of nothing; who has created man to His own likeness, placed him in an abode of delight, out of which he was afterwards banished by sin; and sent him, in his degradation, a Divine Redeemer who should raise him from the very depths into which he had fallen, and lead him back to happiness, with the aid of virtue? When we behold, upon one side, all the doctrines which are the offspring of man's intellect, so incoherent, so false, and so abject as they are, and on the other, a doctrine so true, so perfectly united in all its parts, so highly elevated beyond the reach of reason, and at the same time so conformable to the most solid maxims of that reason, we must conclude, with confidence, that such a doctrine must have come down from heaven. And this is our third proof.

Fourthly—the purity of its morality. There is not one of the libellers of Christianity but must admit, when he seriously declares his undisguised sentiments, that the only morality which is perfect and irreproachable in every respect, is the moral law of the gospel—that admirable code which not only prohibits homicide, but also prescribes the forgiveness of injuries and the love of our enemies; which not only condemns adultery, but also heals the corruption that infects the source of such disorders by permitting pure thoughts and chaste desires alone; which not only commands man to respect the property of his fellow-man, but obliges him to share his own

goods with the poor man, and to relieve the distressed; which even when it does not impose it as a precept upon mankind to practise all the virtues of Angels, invites them by its counsels and instructs them by its maxims to aspire even to such virtues. How, then, can we refrain from concluding that the only religion whose morality is worthy of God, is also the only one which has God as its author? And this is our fourth and our final proof.

Let infidelity lay before us in its turn—I will not say the proofs of its doctrine; for how could it have any such proofs, when it has no doctrine at all? and when, as it believes nothing—as its very name expresses—it can prove nothing—but let it explain at least its difficulties and objections, as its only aim is to destroy. Now, my brethren, strange to say, I venture to maintain that it has not even what can properly be called objections, so futile and so unworthy of any reasonable intellect are the objections which it generally advances against the arguments which we adduce in proof of the divinity of our faith.

I shall show this failure on their part, first with regard to prophecies. When there is question of a great mass of predictions which refer to an extraordinary personage, such as no other has ever been known, and which also refer to an immense combination of facts which embrace the whole economy of religion, the entire course of time, and all the destinies of the world; and when it is evidently impossible that the event could coincide with the mass of those predictions from accident alone, there remain but two objections which could be advanced against them—either to show that they were not fulfilled, or that they had been fabricated after the occurrence of the facts which they professed to foretel. But no one can have the hardihood to maintain, or even to propose either of these two objections. To assert that the prophecies have not been fulfilled would be too glaring a falsehood, for we need but open them, to be convinced that Moses, David, and Isaias have spoken of Jesus Christ in the same terms as the evangelists. To assert that they have been fabricated by the Christians after the occurrence of the events which they professed to foretel, would be too absurd a supposition; for we find them in the hands of the Jews, our enemies, whose care of the oracles which condemn themselves must be above suspicion, and whose testimony respecting the antiquity of those books which they have received from their fathers is unexceptionable. As these two objections—the only ones which deserve the name—

must be admitted to possess no force whatsoever, we must speak plainly, and declare that they have nothing else to advance but miserable cavils. Let them declaim against the probability that the Jews could have crucified Jesus Christ if He had been clearly pointed out to them by the prophets; our answer will be, that the more improbable such an event had been, and consequently the more impossible to foresee by human means, we should, on that account, be the more ready to acknowledge the Divinity of the prophecies, as it is certain that they foretel in a hundred different places the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews, and as it is equally certain that the Jews have crucified Jesus Christ. Let them add, with their habitual tone of sarcasm and derision, that a prophecy is an extraordinary thing, and that it does not become a philosopher to believe extraordinary things: we shall laugh in our turn at this assumption of disdain and arrogance which is unable to conceal the fallacy of their reasoning, or their inability to reply to ours. We admit, indeed, as well as they, that the anticipated knowledge of future events is an extraordinary thing, and so extraordinary that it can only be attributed to God Himself, from which you have already heard us conclude that when the fact of such an extraordinary prescience is proved beyond all doubt by every monument of religion, our reason requires that we should believe that religion to be divine. Our philosophers, on the contrary, while they are unable to question the certainty of the fact—that is to say, the prophecy and its fulfilment—turn from this very strangeness, which is the seal of the Divinity—that it has nothing Divine, and that it should not be believed. Oh, self-styled sages, your madness is beyond all comprehension!

Let us examine whether their reasoning with regard to miracles is more conclusive. To invalidate this second proof, it would be necessary to select at least one out of that multitude of prodigies which are related in the Sacred Scriptures, to examine it, and to show either that it is false, or that it is not sufficiently authenticated; but they have never attempted, and they never will attempt such a proceeding; for what doubt can there be respecting the certainty of public facts which have been testified by friends and enemies, by martyrs and their executioners, by the learned and the wise, as well as by the ignorant and simple people, by the alarmed Judea and the despairing Synagogue, as well as by the astonished gentiles, and at length by the whole world converted to the faith? When, therefore, no reply is vouchsafed to facts which are

verified by such undoubted testimony, and which cannot be denied without folly, except visionary argumentations which are manifestly absurd—when our adversaries are driven to the necessity of asserting that God could not and ought not to work miracles, because, forsooth, our philosophers will not allow Him to deviate from laws of nature which He has once established: or, in other words, that an entire people which had witnessed the fact of a dead man restored to life, or a man who had been blind from his birth restored to sight, ought not to believe what they beheld with their own eyes and touched with their own hands, because we are told that supernatural facts are not to be believed, even when they are palpable and visible—that is all nonsense, and it does not deserve a serious answer. Yet, oh, my God! these are the gross sophisms which excite the admiration of a foolish age, and which it prefers to the Divine light, which shines from Thy holy Word!

But what objection will our infidels bring against the third proof, which is derived from the sublimity of the doctrines of Christianity? Will they have the audacity to deny that Christianity alone has given us accurate notions respecting the nature and attributes of the Deity, and the origin, the duties, and the destiny of man, and that a child, amongst us, who is instructed in the rudiments of his faith, is more enlightened upon these great subjects than Socrates and Plato, and all the celebrated schools of Greece and Rome have ever been? No; they must admit it. But this doctrine, sublime as it is, contains mysteries; and a philosopher can admit nothing except what he comprehends. Oh, amazing excess of presumption and folly! You are too vicious to admit that mysteries exist. Show me, then, any one thing in this world which is not a mystery for you? I will not ask you whether you are able to comprehend what God is, but I ask you what is your own mind? What is your thought? What is that wonderful faculty of speech by means of which you maintain an intercourse with your fellow-men? I will not ask you whether you are able to comprehend the systematic movements of those immense bodies which roll above your heads, or the laws by which worlds are governed and regulated, or those stupendous arrangements which combine and unite the whole system of creation into one harmonious union; but I ask you, can you comprehend the instinct of the animal which serves you? or how those plants which you sow with your own hands, and which grow up before your eyes, are again produced? Can you comprehend the structure of an insect or a flower, or the properties of the

grain of sand upon which you tread? Will you refuse to believe that all these exist, because there is not one of them, how trifling soever it may be, but actually surpasses your comprehension? or will you venture to assert that natural and human things may be incomprehensible and mysterious, but that supernatural and divine things cannot be so? See to what absurd conclusions you are led by the ravings of a philosophy which undertakes to advance its shallow arguments against God Himself.

And what objection can you bring against the morality of the Gospel? Is it not holy enough? Shame upon them, my brethren. They do not blush to make even its sanctity a subject of reproach. They assert that it is too pure—too violently opposed to the inclinations of nature; and, that by restraining the passions, it stifles the first seeds of exalted sentiments, and destroys the impulse which urges men to perform great achievements. Do you hear this avowal? It is here those men who are no less wicked than insane—those teachers of vice as well as of infidelity—who have the hardihood to admit that they advocate a doctrine which was formerly disclaimed even by the infamous school of an Epicurus—it is here they drop the mask. According to their doctrine virtue does not consist in resisting the corrupt inclinations of the heart, but in following the bent of those inclinations; voluptuousness, pride, selfishness, avarice, and ambition, are alone capable of elevating the soul, and leading it to perform great exploits. On this principle, voluptuousness will henceforth form faithful spouses, virtuous fathers, and obedient and respectful children; selfishness will produce the devotedness of heroes, and lead them to sacrifice life itself for their country's welfare; avarice will give us Vincents of Paul, and sisters of charity; ambition and pride will give us kings like St. Louis. Alas! we know too well what mighty effects are produced by the passions, when the restraint which held them is broken by a satanic philosophy, and they are supposed to reign with uncontrolled dominion. We have had a melancholy experience of it once before; and may it never again be renewed to the misfortune of the world.

But why should we keep up this discussion any longer with men in whose minds infidelity has extinguished every glimmering of reason, and who, by the extravagance of their opinions, will sooner or later become the by-word of the universe. Is there anything, how notorious soever it may be, which they have not denied, or how evident soever, which

they have not called in question? From error to error, from abyss to abyss, to what have they come at length? They have denied historical certainty, without which nothing can be relied on in the affairs of men, and the distinction between moral good and evil, which is the sole foundation of every duty, and the very existence of God, that great first cause without which nothing can exist; they have denied the existence of their own soul, which they have confounded with matter, and their reason, which they have set down as inferior to instinct. By an unexampled prodigy of contradiction they have made a boast of being themselves the only and infallible organs of truth, and yet, they assert that no distinction can be drawn between truth and falsehood; they have proclaimed themselves to be the teachers and the models of virtue, and yet they assert that vice and virtue are identical; they have proudly conferred upon themselves the title of sages by excellence, of the lights and oracles of mankind, and yet their maxim is—"We are nothing better than the brute creation."

Thus it is, O great God! that in their ineffectual efforts to raise themselves to an equality with Thee, they have fallen below the level of the rest of mankind: and we have seen the words of Thy Apostle verified in their regard—namely, that all those who despise Thy divine instructions should be delivered up to a reprobate sense—a spirit of error and giddiness; *Tradidit illos in reprobum sensum,** that growing vain in the pride of their own thoughts, and losing their way in the labyrinth of their inventions and systems, they could no longer pursue the track which led to truth or happiness; *Evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis;*† that gloomy vapours should arise from the depths of their corrupt hearts, to disturb and bewilder their understandings, and to plunge them into thick darkness; *Obscuratum est insipiens cor eorum;*‡ and that, to punish their guilty ambition of acquiring an immortal reputation, by means of a false and audacious wisdom, they should for ever be disgraced by the celebrity which pursues the memory of notorious madmen. *Dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt.*§

May their disciples, instructed by the punishment which has befallen them, abandon that course which they have marked out. May the whole world, whilst it does justice to their talents, detest the sacrilegious use to which they have perverted them, and grow more attached than ever before, oh, my God! to Thy holy doctrine, which can alone enlighten us here below

* *Rom.* i. 28. † *Ibid.* 21. ‡ *Ibid.* § *Ibid.* 22.

with the true light, and lead us to that blessed abode in which we shall behold it without a veil, for all eternity, in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! *Amen.*

SERMON THE SECOND.

GUILT OF THE INFIDEL.

MUST we return again to the subject of infidelity? Yes, my brethren, and even this is not the last time we shall assail it. In the foregoing discourse we have proved its folly; we shall now prove its guilt. The infidel boasts not only of superior and exclusive wisdom, but he also endeavours to impose himself upon us as the only real man of virtue. If we believe him, religion only serves to weaken the moral virtues by adding to them—as he asserts—certain theological or mystic virtues, which, according to him, produce hypocrisy and fanaticism, and lead to illusions and excesses which the enlightened reason of the philosopher cannot endure. He adds, that, as he makes nature and the well-regulated interests of human society the basis of every action, and discards the paltry observances of a piety which seems to him good for nothing, but to trouble feeble intellects and to excite ardent imaginations—as he is alone acquainted with man's real obligations—as he alone places the law of morality upon its true foundation—he is therefore alone capable of regenerating the world, and if he were once its master, happiness and virtue would soon maintain an unlimited and uncontrolled dominion there.

It is this new assumption I intend to refute this day, by laying before you the principles of philosophical unbelief and the works which it has already accomplished—by showing you the spirit which animates it, and by proving that it is no less the enemy of man than of God—no less the enemy of society than of religion—no less criminal and destructive than it is blind and senseless. Such is the subject of this discourse which may be expressed in one sentence—the guilt of the infidel.

I entreat you, my brethren, to bestow your attention upon what I shall advance, and to examine every argument which I shall adduce. I will not indulge in any exaggeration—in any vain declamation; but, on the other hand, I will not conceal any truth however strong and overpowering it may be. It is not passion but unfeigned zeal which directs my words. I do

not so much propose to myself to make infidelity odious, as to enlighten the mind of the infidel, and to remove his erroneous notions, by making him conscious of the danger and the pernicious effects of those doctrines by which he has suffered himself to be led astray.

Oh, Divine Spirit! enlighten the hearts of my hearers while my voice shall resound in their ears, and grant that these words—which are Thy own words—may not be heard without profit in this assembly. This, we beg, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. *Ave Maria, &c.*

"What am I guilty of?" is the oft-repeated inquiry of the infidel. "It may be that I am in error; but, after all, is this error an unpardonable offence? and is it possible that any man could deserve the eternal vengeance of God for no other crime than because he is deceived?"

Such are the excuses which he endeavours to advance in his own vindication; but, my brethren, listen to my reply.

I would tell him, in the first place, that his infidelity is not so much an error of his intellect as it is an effect of the depravity of his heart. I ask you, what moral man, what chaste, or virtuous, or innocent soul, has ever thought of doubting the existence of a God of sovereign wisdom and power—the Creator and Master of the universe—the Author of reason and conscience—the first Legislator and Sovereign Judge of all mankind—who demands their obedience, who is entitled to their worship, who is the invisible witness of their actions, and after the present life, reserves a reward for their virtue, and punishment for their crimes? These truths, which are so evident, and graven by the hand of nature itself on our inmost being, can never be darkened in the eyes of the understanding until the passions have poured their deepest darkness upon the heart. As long as men are faithful to the duties which religion enjoins, they find it to be true, to be consistent with reason, and to be worthy of belief and reverence; it is only when they surrender themselves to the indulgence of those propensities which it condemns—when it seems to have nothing left but its threats and thunders—that they begin to distrust the infallibility of its oracles, to dispute the authority of its precepts, and to declaim against the incomprehensibility of its mysteries; and thus infidelity follows in the train of vice. This is expressly pointed out in the Scriptures. *Dixit insipiens in corde suo non est Deus.** This is also confirmed by the most

* "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."—*Ps.* xiv. 1.

constant experience. When did infidelity spring up amongst us? Was it not at the fatal period of the decay of public morality—when every noble and generous feeling became extinguished in the midst of scandalous voluptuousness, and gave room to the unbridled love of criminal indulgence—when the luxury and excesses of the great and the wealthy knew no bounds—when they gloried only in the shameful refinements of pleasure, and in boldly despising all the decencies of modesty—when the spirit of libertinism gained possession of every class of society, and all the restraints of duty were relaxed day after day, and threatened at length to be burst asunder? It was at this period that the general corruption sent forth that swarm of pretended sages who employed themselves in transferring to the minds of others the depravity which had already festered in their own hearts—shaping iniquity into a science and perverseness into a system—undermining all the foundations of morality with methodical skill—justifying every disorder by specious maxims—canonizing vice along with impiety, under the name of philosophy—and devoting virtue and religion to contempt, under titles of superstition and prejudice. The teachers of this newly-invented wisdom were men of notorious guilt, whose actions corresponded with their doctrine. The authentic histories of their lives exhibit nothing but a tissue of scandals; their private correspondence and their public confessions reveal infamies and horrors such as it would have been impossible to believe if any others except themselves had related them; so that it seemed to be the will of Providence that posterity should learn by the most undoubted testimony the true cause of their furious hatred of the Gospel. But if such were the masters, what must we think of their disciples? Is it possible that the love of propriety and truth could make them embrace a doctrine which has been dictated by the spirit of libertinism and falsehood? My brethren, I do not wish to indulge in any injurious suspicion, in any unfavourable conjecture; but if there be any one of these unfortunate adepts of unbelief in the present assembly, I beg of him now to interrogate his own conscience, and listen attentively to its reply. No one can overhear him; let him therefore be candid with himself. How does he observe chastity and other duties? What are his secret dispositions and habits? Did he aim no blow at virtue before he abjured the faith? Is it not the means of blunting the sting of remorse he has sought, more than anything else, in this convenient philosophy? Is it not the liberty which this gives

him of doing whatever he pleases, with the privilege of being ashamed of nothing, that makes it so pleasing and acceptable to him? Are not those audacious pages which most daringly insult modesty, and are no less disgraceful to the reader than they are to the writer, the very ones which he reads with the greatest avidity in the books of these philosophic moralists? If religion were not more violently opposed to his inclinations than the sentiments of these corrupt men, would it be as false and unjust in his imagination as he now conceives it to be? Again, I say, let his conscience answer. It has spoken. And that is enough for my purpose. Let him now pass judgment upon himself, whether his infidelity is only an innocent error, or whether it is not rather the fruit of more than one crime.

I would tell him, in the second place, that infidelity is a crime of peculiar enormity; for other disorders, however grievous and culpable they may be, are capable of being attributed more or less to imbecility, to surprise, to the rage of some violent passion which disturbed the senses or reason; they leave—or it is possible that they may leave—behind them in the heart some respect for virtue, or the fear of God, or some disposition of returning to Him sooner or later, through repentance or love. But infidelity is a formal collision with heaven, an open revolt, and a declaration of war against the Deity. What is the language of the infidel? Listen to it, my friends; and you must shudder when you hear it. "I do not wish to be any longer under the hand of God, like a child beneath the authority of his master; I do not mean to be always trembling, and offering violence to myself. This timid manner of doing evil is too humiliating to me. I wish to persuade myself, and to maintain that evil is good, that to follow one's inclinations is a duty, and that to gratify them is virtue. Tell me not that God forbids me to follow them, because I will deny, if I please, that God exists; or, supposing I admit that He exists, I will assert that He ought not to interfere with what I think and what I do; that I am free and independent; that my mind, my senses, my will, belong to myself alone; that I make use of them as I think proper; and that I am accountable to myself alone for all my actions. Tell me not that God has communicated His designs to others—that He has spoken to man, and promulgated His enactments by an express revelation; for I will maintain that, even admitting He has spoken, I am not obliged to recognise His voice, and that I am not an advocate of revelations; that without any further examination, I re-

nounce them all as false; and that I am resolved not to admit any one of them, until God shall come in person to bring me back directly to myself. Do not expect to intimidate me with the threats of those punishments which it is said He prepares for those who revolt against Him; for, in the first place, I bid them defiance; and, secondly, I maintain that God is unjust and cruel if He punishes me for having acted according to my opinions and sought to obtain my well-being, as I understand it. Do not flatter yourselves that you can affect me by speaking of His love, and of the infinite rewards which He promises to those who obey Him; for I want nothing from Him, nor do I want Himself either. He may forget me, so that I may be able to forget Him with impunity; and He may keep His 'blessed eternity' for Himself provided He allows me to enjoy the pleasures which the passions procure during time." Do you not imagine, my brethren, that such impious and insane language must have come forth from the very depths of hell? Condense all the works of our infidel sophists, extract all their substance, and you can only produce what you have just heard. And will any one ask me again whether this execrable audacity is a crime? Ah! you can ask me such a question no more. Moreover, my brethren, I have hitherto done nothing more than state the preliminaries for the accusation of the infidel; but I shall now enter upon it. I reduce it all under two heads, which I propose to explain in succession; and for that purpose I beg to solicit your attention.

I.—The infidel professes a doctrine which is pleasing to the ear and the heart of every wretch, which is favourable to every crime, which is subversive of the state, and of all social order, and which tends to the destruction of all mankind.

Find, if you can, a wretch, an enemy of God and man, who will not feel delighted to learn that there is no essential difference between vice and virtue—between the most abominable outrages and the most sacred actions; that all the faith of generations respecting an invisible witness and judge of our thoughts and works, respecting an invariable and eternal law and justice, are mere reveries and idle fancies; that it is lawful to do whatever can be done with impunity; that conscience is a prejudice, and remorse a weakness; that interest and pleasure are the only motives which can influence a reasonable being; that no other goods and no other evils save those of the present life exist; and that death makes the good man and the sinner in every respect equal for all eternity.

Go, if you be allowed, into every place of public resort, and

teach these maxims to the multitude. Would you not be listened to with transport by all the adulterous spouses, by all the unnatural children, by all the subjects that are traitors to their prince, by all the plunderers of others' property, by every murderer and parricide? Armed by this sublime philosophy against the reproaches of conscience, against the terrors of religion, and against that natural shame which accompanies crime, let those perverse beings conceive by any means the hope of evading human laws, or of prevailing over them by force: or, let them have courage enough to brave the scaffold, and the almost insensible stroke of sudden death which they suffer upon it, what restraint can stop their mad career? What an inundation of crime must we not expect?

Alas! this is not a supposition. What have we witnessed ever since these detestable doctrines have gained circulation amongst us? Without having recourse to those twenty-five years of blood and tears, during which impiety, invested with legislative and supreme authority, has been able to command excesses of every kind, in what condition are we even at the present day, when it reigns no longer, but freely circulates its poison? With what outrages do our tribunals resound, and what events occur at every moment to terrify our imagination, and to make our hearts wither? The crimes of our days are no longer violations of conjugal fidelity, or the excesses of some spendthrift, or theft, or fraud, or even ordinary murders; but —Oh, heavens! what am I about to say?—sometimes the nuptial bed stained with murder, inflicted by the very hands of the wife or husband; sometimes the son or daughter murdering the author of their existence; sometimes the father or mother themselves taking away the life . . . . . I cannot give utterance to it. Oh, God! oh, nature! oh, hearts of fathers and mothers! Who could initiate Christians in these monstrous and almost unheard-of crimes, which are enough to make savage hordes shudder, and to terrify the wild beasts of the forest? Who, again, has sharpened the daggers of those numerous suicides, who think it to be a matter of little or no consequence to plunge themselves into annihilation a little sooner than they should be obliged to do in the natural order of things, but who, regarding it as a matter of mighty importance to gratify their rage, coldly meditate assassinations, with the resolution of sacrificing themselves upon the quivering bodies of their victims, and glory in this philosophical combination of murder with suicide? Who has also trained up and fashioned, even in the lowest classes of society, those malefactors of well-practised and con-

summate infamy, who on being accused and convicted of the blackest crimes, proudly appeared before th ir judges, boasted of having acted consistently with their principles—insultingly displayed their hatred of public order, of religion, of God Himself—seemed to find an impious sport in the inextricable labyrinth of contradiction and perjury, in which they embarrassed and confounded justice—maintained a detestable fidelity to their accomplices, even to the end—shrouded the secrecy of their plots in an invincible silence—and through the proud insensibility with which they expired at last, with blasphemy upon their lips, changed the very punishment which should be the reparation of all the scandals of their lives into a new and closing scandal? Who, I ask you again, has given birth to all these monsters? Who, my brethren, but this great mistress of iniquity—this abominable doctrine, which destroys all morality, by reducing it to a human and arbitrary convention—which stifles the purest and most tender feelings of nature itself, by recognising no other bond of marriage but such as unites the brute creation—no other tie between the child and his parents, but the physical wants of early years—no other dignity in man but what is also enjoyed by the vilest animal—no other duty, but obedience to the instinct of appetite and passion—and no other future to hope or fear, but annihilation? It is, therefore, true to say, in the first place, that the infidel professes a doctrine which is pleasing to the ear and the heart of every wretch, and favourable to every crime.

It is also a doctrine which is subversive of the state and of all social order. Oh! my brethren, how happy must our fathers have been when they recognised no other philosophy except that which came down from heaven—when they made no distinction between their privileges and their duties, and lived in security, and peace and joy. What has become of all this happiness, and what alarming confusion has succeeded this beautiful order, ever since another very different philosophy has come forth from the abyss of hell, and said to the multitude—that multitude which is so blind in its desires, so inconstant in its caprices, so terrible in its rage—that multitude which requires to be restrained by authority, as the torrent is restrained by banks, lest it should overturn and destroy all established order—"You are the only sovereign power; so far from being formed to obey, the source of all power is to be found in you and not in God. Your will is the only law, and your orders the only justice. Those who govern you are nothing more than your delegates and subjects. If they lay

claim to that supremacy which exists in you alone, they are usurpers; if they command you to do any thing else but what you please, they are tyrants; if they do not lay down their authority whenever you wish to recover it, they are rebels. You are their judge and the arbiter of their destiny; you dispose, according to your will, of the public fortune, of the life and property of each individual, that is to say, of the great whole, which is yourself. These are your undoubted rights. To recover these rights, insurrection is the most sacred of all duties; and, if it were necessary to sacrifice many generations and millions of men, the benefit would not be too dearly purchased." O hypocritical wisdom, merciless fury, what is this you have said? What calamities have issued from your lips along with these words? The angry winds which agitate the waves, and stir up the ocean from its depths, do not toss the frail barks with greater violence, than this word will agitate empires and kingdoms. What factions, what destruction, what rage. I see the pillars of the moral world shaken—society tottering to its foundations—torrents of blood overflowing the earth—thrones overturned, mingling their ruins with those of altars—institutions, laws, morality, arts, civilization, buried altogether in the immense abyss of the most destructive anarchy—outrages . . . . Oh, my brethren, fear not that I shall now renew your sorrow; that I shall describe what you would wish to be able to efface, even with your blood, from our annals and from the memory of men. But shall we not show that which is peculiarly the work of infidelity—that great work which it has prepared, and which it has announced with so much self-complacency for the last fifty years—which its disciples have executed in its name, in furtherance of its principles, and in pursuance of the plans which its masters have laid down—which other disciples are attempting at the present moment—and, alas! perhaps their attempts may be successful amongst other great nations? And if that same God who has set limits to the ocean, did not also fix them to the inundation of these execrable doctrines, what would be the end of its disastrous consequences? What, my brethren, but the total destruction of the human race? Such should be the term of that regeneration which a barbarous philosophy has promised us. Has it not explained its sentiments clearly enough? Has it not declared that the only state which is adapted to man is the state of nature; and that such a state is the war of each individual against all, and of all against each individual; that when restored to this

primitive perfection, the man of nature, born in the woods, has no other care but to satisfy his appetites, and to seek his animal gratification at any price; that he recognises no father, no child, no spouse, no brother, no friend; that the rest of mankind are nothing more in his regard than wild beasts are with regard to each other; that whoever disputes a plunder or an indulgence with him is an enemy: and that the strongest ought to destroy the weakest? But why should I repeat in this pulpit all the abominable reveries with which so many books are filled? Who is ignorant of them? Who can fail to perceive that, in this imaginary state of nature, to which our modern sophists desire to lead us, men would devour each other, and the whole world would soon be a desert! It would seem as if the destroying angel had inspired them. And, have we not actually witnessed in our revolution—which, I repeat, has been nothing more than the literal fulfilment of their theories, and the rigorous application of their principles—something which bore the closest resemblance to an enterprise of universal extermination, followed up with inconceivable perseverance, and an ardour ever increasing for the space of eighteen months, until Providence, which had concealed itself in its place of retreat, in order to afford us time to acknowledge and to make atonement for our madness, vouchsafed at last to display itself, dispersed the murderers with its thunders, and suffered the human race to breathe in security once more.

Thus, oh, great God! to punish nations, thou art sometimes pleased to allow atheism, and the most fatal errors, to extend their mischievous shadow over them, and cover them with its thickest darkness. *Posuisti tenebras et facta est nox.** Under cover of this gloomy and terrible night, all these monsters, who are unworthy of the name of men, and who resemble those wild beasts whose lot they envy, and whose ferocity they exceed, issue forth in swarms from the haunts where they concealed themselves. *In ipsa pertransibunt omnes bestiæ silvæ.*† Like hungry lions, they fall roaring upon society to devour it as a prey. *Catuli leonum rugientes, ut rapiant et quærant escam sibi.*‡ But, O Lord! before they are satiated with slaughter, Thou makest Thy sun to rise again; Thou causest the light of religion and truth, which they believed to be extinguished, to shine once more around them. Terrified by the

* "Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night."—*Ps.* ciii. 20.

† "In it shall all the beasts of the woods go about."—*Ibid.*

‡ "The young lions roaring after their prey and seeking their meat."—*Ibid.* 21.

glare of day, they betake themselves to flight, and with loud screams they again take refuge within their caverns. *Ortus est sol et in cubilibus suis collocabuntur.** Human nature is reinstated in all its privileges; the virtuous man confidently appears once more; order is restored; and all things resume their accustomed course. *Exibit homo ad opus suum, et ad operationem suam usque ad vesperam.*†

Before proceeding further, it may be necessary to clear up one difficulty. Some one of you may say, "If infidelity has given rise to crimes and excesses, religion is not exempt from the same reproach; and more than one act of violence, more than one massacre even is imputed to the latter; so that religion and infidelity are both equally circumstanced upon this head."

As there never was an objection more frequently repeated than this, in like manner, there never was one more easily refuted, or more groundless; or rather, my brethren, it is refuted as soon as it is advanced, as you shall presently see—first, by the evident absurdity of all that it presupposes, and secondly, by the authentic and express admission of the infidels themselves.

I say first, the evident absurdity of all that it presupposes; because it is equally absurd to pretend that religion—by which I understand the true religion—the only one which deserves the name—the only one which I feel interested in defending—could ever have been the cause of unjust violence, of murder, or of any disorder whatsoever, as it would be to deny that modern infidelity is the most fertile source of every mischief and every crime.

Religion, my dear friends, is not a mere word, or something unknown and unlearned. It is a doctrine which is well known, and contained in books which are known equally well, and which may be had most commonly: they are the gospels, the works of the holy fathers, the catechisms, the books of piety which are in the hands of the faithful. Now, show me anything in the mass of doctrine which these books contain, except that we must love God and all men for His sake, but, above all, our enemies; that we must do good to all, but more particularly those who wish evil to us; that we must forgive injuries; that we must submit to legitimate authority; that we must shed our own blood, if necessary, for the faith, but

* "The sun ariseth; and they shall lie down in their dens."—*Ps.* civ. 22.

† "Man shall go forth to his work and to his labour until the evening."—*Ibid.* 23.

never shed the blood of those who persecute it. You cannot name a single description of guilt, from the most enormous crime to the smallest transgression, which is not forbidden by the religion of Jesus Christ. You cannot name any virtue, from the most ordinary duty to the most rare and sublime perfection, which it does not either command or counsel. You must admit, that if this doctrine prohibits every evil without exception, if it breathes nothing except mercy, forgiveness, and love, it is impossible to say, with any degree of reason, that it is the cause of cruelty, of rage, or vengeance. Undoubtedly, avarice, ambition, political intrigue, or vindictiveness, may be able to commit excesses in its name, as we have seen so many excesses committed in our own days, in the names of humanity, of patriotism, and of justice, whilst no one ever dreamed or seriously imputing to those sacred names the crimes of the men who have thus profaned them.

So much for religion: let us next pass on to infidelity. That is also a doctrine; it is also contained in books—the books of our pretended philosophers. Now, tell me a single duty, a single virtue, a single honorable feeling, which is not reproached or assailed, or consigned to ridicule in some portion of these books. Name, or find out, or imagine any species of crime, any atrocity, any detestable vice, any monstrous abomination, any prodigy of senseless guilt, and I will shew it to you expressly defended in these very books.

You may imagine, perhaps, my zeal misleads me, that I am dealing in exaggeration. Would to heaven that such were the case, and that the perverseness of man were incapable of going to the length of such excesses. But if I have strength to speak, my assertion will be maintained, unfortunately, too well. How great is the conflict within me between a zeal for the truth, and the fear of the horror which I must excite in this [illegible] than assembly! But zeal must prevail. Sacred rools and walls, which should not resound with horrors, forgive me! Holy altar, before which resounds nothing but the Lamb that is slain there, should alone hear utterance, forgive me! Faithful people who hear me, do you also forgive me if I afflict your ears with such monstrous descriptions! My brethren, amongst the philosophical works which have been published within the last century—which have been the precursors of our revolution, and of which splendid new editions are announced—and adorned, it is said, with the choicest productions of the pencils of our most skilful artists—there is one in particular whose name could not be pronounced in the holy

place, but which, after the most frightful declamations of impiety, after all the grossness, which the most disgusting licentiousness could accumulate, after defending acts of cruelty which make nature shudder, next proceeds—to what, my brethren? To reproach us with our superstition and our scruples, because we do not imitate the feasts of cannibals. The author employs elaborate dissertations and arguments to persuade us that we ought to overcome this "weakness." Oh, my God! these are books of morality which infidelity publishes, in magnificent editions for the rich, and in less expensive ones for the poor—which it circulates through our cottages—with which it inundates the country, as well as the city; and these awful lessons have been put into practice before our very eyes, in that philosophic revolution through which we have just passed. Oh, France! what would they make of you! And, after this pretended age of enlightenment, must you again return to the habits of the cannibal? I am confounded, my brethren; undoubtedly, you are also confounded. Shame, indignation, and sorrow seize upon our souls, and tear them asunder. We cannot be too precipitate in withdrawing our eyes from such a revolting picture.

Let us for ever bless the Father of mercies, who hath saved us. But if we are not disposed to suffer a second and a speedy fall into the abyss out of which He has released us, let us not forget what doctrine has been the cause of all our calamities, and let us never forget that this doctrine of infidelity, which is pleasing to the ear and the heart of every wretch, which is favourable to every crime and subversive of all social order, ultimately ends in the destruction of the human race.

II.—The infidel professes a doctrine which, when carefully analysed and examined, may be altogether comprised in three words, viz., hatred of God—hatred of himself—hatred of all mankind; so that the infidel who is accomplished and hardened in his irreligion—who knows all the consequences of it, and embraces them all—is an unnatural being, the enemy of his Creator, of himself, and of his fellow-men.

First, the infidel is the enemy of God; and how could he be otherwise? A rebel to all His laws—the only being in the universe who is a stranger to that worship which all creation renders to its Author—unwilling to believe what He teaches, or to practise what He enjoins, or to acknowledge any one of those rights which He possesses over man, who is the work of His hands—the infidel must feel an inward consciousness that this God, if He exists, can be nothing else than an irritated and

avenging God in his regard. He detests that sovereign justice whose rigour threatens him, that infinite sanctity which eternally recoils from crime, that supreme and inflexible truth which admits of no fellowship with falsehood and error, and that unbounded power which must sooner or later overwhelm all that presumes to rise up in rebellion against it. Whatever he recognises in God, serves only to terrify and confound him. He would fain persuade himself that God does not exist. That his courage may be strengthened in the impious conflict which he wages against God, he would be delighted to see the whole world engaged in one conspiracy against Him; he, therefore, unfurls the standard of rebellion, and assails the Almighty with the weapons of sophistry, derision, and blasphemy; his hatred is aggravated and embittered the more in proportion as he insults his Creator: he endeavours to excite enemies and adversaries against Him everywhere; and he spares no effort to multiply them. Hence arises, in an infidel generation, this deluge of audacious writings which may with propriety, be designated manifestoes and libels against God—in which a hypocritical deism soon degenerates into a shameless, unblushing atheism, and an absolute pyrrhonism—in which every one of the divine perfections become, in turn, the subject of the most indecent sarcasms—in which, the more effectually to banish the only true divinity, they agree to admit everything as a divinity in His place—nature, accident, blind fatality, insensible matter, the universality of beings, the great whole, and even nothing itself; such are the gods of those men who detest that God which the whole world adores. Hence it is, that in an unbelieving world, piety is despised, and devoted to the most bitter derision under the name of superstition, and often calumniated, and described in the blackest colours, under the odious name of fanaticism. Hence it is, that whenever an infidel faction succeeds in its efforts to grasp at power, and to bear authority in any state, that the name of God is soon effaced from its code of laws, and from every public monument: His worship is abolished; every memorial that can suggest the recollection of Him is consigned to destruction; the temples where His praises had been sung are overturned; the altars where He received our incense are demolished; His ministers and faithful servants are proscribed; the observance of the Lord's Day, the fulfilment of the most obvious duties of religion, are punished as if they were the most enormous crimes; the ordinary names of days, and months, and seasons, are changed, in order to exterminate every vestige of the fes-

tivals which had been celebrated in His honour; and all established order is altogether subverted, in the vain hope, that in the midst of such universal confusion, of such a dreadful chaos, the world at length may lose all recollection of its Author.

Is this an invention of mine, my brethren? Is it not precisely what your own eyes have witnessed under the short, but memorable reign of philosophical unbelief? Now, I appeal to yourselves, is it possible for the hatred of God to exhibit itself with less equivocal marks? Could that hatred go to greater lengths than it has already gone? True, all the infidel party have not been accomplices in these acts of violence to which I have alluded; neither have they all approved of them; such madness is that of the whole sect collectively, and not of the individuals of which it is composed. But observe, my brethren—and you, in particular, whom infidelity may have seduced, hear it with terror. Every infidel, hardened in his iniquity, determined upon encountering the hazard, and upon living to the end as if there were no God, must necessarily desire that God should not exist. What an oppressive weight would be removed from his heart, if he could only acquire the least assurance that this invisible and formidable power is nothing more than a vain phantom. The unfortunate wretch then eagerly desires the annihilation of that Supreme Being who has endowed him with existence, with life, and with every other blessing. He annihilates that Supreme Being as far as he can by thought and desires: and if he does not succeed more effectually in his desires, he is only prevented by a want of opportunity and not of inclination. His hatred of God—I shudder at the expression—is a deadly hatred. He is a deicide in his heart; and hereby are completely fulfilled those profound words of the Scripture, *He hath said in his heart, there is no God.** He hath inwardly pronounced, in his heart, the sentence which would condemn the Deity Himself to annihilation *Dixit in corde suo, non est Deus.*

Secondly, the infidel hates himself. This proposition must astonish you, my brethren: and, at first sight, it may seem to be a paradox. But listen, and then judge for yourselves.

The infidel finds his most formidable adversary, and his most obstinate foe, within himself. His soul, that spiritual substance which has emanated from the bosom of God, whose breath and image it is, despite every effort which he makes to degrade and

* *Ps.* xiv. 1.

corrupt it, cannot forget its original excellence to such a degree, as that it should altogether refrain from bearing witness in favour of its Author, and from rising in opposition against falsehood and blasphemy in defence of eternal truth. In vain does the infidel devise specious systems of unbelief; his reason rejects them in spite of all his efforts to the contrary. In vain does he frame for himself a code of morality in conformity with his passions; in vain does he strive to persuade himself into the belief that integrity is an unmeaning phrase, and modesty a vulgar prejudice; that interest is justice, and pleasure virtue. His conscience reprobates all such detestable maxims, and proclaims to him, in the midst of the treasures which he has usurped, that he is an unjust plunderer—in the abyss of his scandalous pleasures, that he is an infamous wretch—in the enjoyment of the most prosperous success which attends his abominable conspiracies, that he is a monster. In vain does he confine all his hopes and aspirations to this earth, and endeavours to persuade himself that this future life, of which men speak, is a vain chimera; a mighty voice issues from the recesses of his own heart, and says to him—"Senseless man! thou art immortal! That God whom thou dost set at defiance now, will judge thee hereafter in that other world which thou knowest not, but to which thou art hastening—where the punishments of vice, as well as the rewards of virtue, are eternal. Overcome by irritation and despair at his inability to silence this mysterious and merciless censor, which incessantly pursues him with threats and reproaches, he begins to detest his reason, his conscience, his soul, and his immortality. The enemy of himself, he cannot endure the reflection that he is not to die altogether; he fixes his eager looks upon the grave: he beholds the putrefaction, the worms, the disgusting mass of corruption and ashes; and he exclaims—"This is my inheritance, my future state, and my latter end! I desire no other." He flatters himself with the vain hope that his whole being, and more particularly that divine light which glimmers within him, and which he abominates, will be extinguished and entombed for ever in the midst of this dust and corruption. *For his heart is ashes, and his hope vain earth, and his life more base than clay.** Such unnatural desires are not attributed to him by any effort of my imagination. Open the books of the infidels, and you will find such sentiments invariably expressed in them. What other feeling could be capable

* *Wisd.* xv. 10.

of dictating so many monstrous productions, the very names of which could not be pronounced without disgust, or, perhaps, without indecency, if they were uttered in this pulpit, so degrading are they to human nature. In these we behold frantic philosophers, furiously enraged against their own souls —exhausting all the resources of false science, and all the inventions which sophistry could suggest—madly consigning themselves to eternal destruction, and exultingly applauding themselves with the hope that all their experiments and discoveries may be rewarded by the chance, that no portion of their being shall be able to escape from putrefaction and annihilation. Is not this a deadly hatred? And yet it is thus the infidel hates himself. He is a suicide in his heart; but he is a suicide of an unusual and peculiarly odious description, as he not only endeavours to destroy the life of the mortal portion of his being, but of that portion also which is immortal. He longs for a death which no tyrant is able to inflict: he carries his hatred and his murderous wishes even beyond the limits of possibility. Oh! Divine Wisdom, it is Thou Thyself hast declared that *he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul.**

It remains to be shown that the infidel is the common enemy of all mankind. But how can this proposition stand in need of any further proof? How can the wretched man entertain for others more favourable sentiments than those which he entertains for himself? Is not every blow which he aims at himself directed with equal force against his fellow-men? That he may degrade himself to as low a depth as his wishes lead him, must he not consign all that is human in his nature to degradation and reproach? He desires that himself should be either a beast, or a plant, or filth, or ashes: he must also desire that every one else should be no better. Observe, my brethren, what delight he feels at destroying, even in imagination, all that can dignify or distinguish the rational being—society, laws, civilization, morality. See how he drives mankind from the cities, and makes them roam about through the forests—how he degrades man to the mere indulgence of pleasure—divests him of all his natural dignity, and even of the clothes with which decency covers him—reduces him to a shameful nakedness—bends him down to the earth—forbids him the exercise of thought—condemns him to dispute the means of his support with those wild beasts which he exhibits as models

* *Ps.* x. 6.

worthy of imitation—and invites him to place all his glory in elevating himself to the level of their instinct. There is no resolution which he does not meditate—no effort, how monstrous soever it may be, which he does not make to realize such detestable fancies; and, to borrow an expression of the sect, which you cannot hear without disgust, "To sink the man in the animal." And why? In order that in the midst of such universal degradation, the troublesome light of reason may be extinguished, and the voice of conscience may be stifled at last, and the cry of immortality be heard no more by brutalized mankind; for it is against immortality that their efforts are chiefly directed. They desire that none should presume to aspire to it, or that the good man could live after death, to place the misfortune of the wicked in reprobating contrast with his own happiness. They desire that all should perish, once and for ever; that soul and body should be the inevitable and exclusive prey of death and annihilation; and that of all man had ever been, nothing more should remain but what he possesses in common with the vilest animals—the bones, the ashes, and the putrefaction of the grave. This hope is what constitutes all the infidel's consolation and delight. Endeavour to deprive him of it—tell him that there is something within which must escape from this awful destruction—and he will break forth into exclamations of rage. Ah! speak to me no more of that tyrant who wished that the whole body of a great nation had only one head, that he might cut it off with a single stroke. The infidel, far more barbarous, would desire that the entire human race had only one soul, and that it were in his power to procure its annihilation. His hatred for his species, as well as for God and for himself, is a deadly hatred. He is not only a deicide and a suicide, but he is also a homicide in his heart; and a homicide, not merely of a portion of man, but of his whole being; not of one man, or even of many men, but of all mankind; not for a time, but for all eternity—an inconceivable and truly infernal rage, which it would be impossible to attribute to any other but to him whom the Scripture describes to be a universal murderer—*a murderer from the beginning.**

What conclusion can we come to, then, but that the infidel is guilty of treason against God and against man; that his crime includes every other enormity; and that if there were no hell for the punishment of other sinners, it would, alas! be necessary to create one especially for him.

* *John* viii. 44.

Tell us then no more, shameless sophist of Geneva!* that if you are mistaken in your views, you have no reason to fear that God should reprobate you for your false reasoning. Your crime does not consist in this, but in the fact of your having stood forth in the midst of a corrupt and infidel generation as the defender and the model of every vice; in having filled books with those pernicious maxims and detestable paradoxes which stimulate ardent souls to every sort of crime—which shake the foundations of empires, produce disastrous revolutions, and will probably cause blood to flow for centuries yet to come; in having been the enemy of God, whom you insulted with a thousand blasphemies—that God whose name you wished should be unknown to infancy and youth, and His worship despised by mature years and old age; the enemy of your fellow-men, whom you wished to degrade below the level of rational beings, to transform them into wild beasts, and teach them to devour each other; the enemy of your father, whom you abandoned—of your children, whom you exposed—of your country, which you disgraced—of your benefactors, whom, according to your own admission, you could not refrain from hating for the very favours which they conferred—of the whole world, which your pernicious talents endeavoured to overturn; the enemy of yourself, whom you sacrificed to a ferocious vanity, which, after having separated you from the society of men, consigned you at last to madness and despair, armed you with fire and poison—as too certain documents attest—to put an end to your days; and thus, with your own hands to vindicate that divinity which you disowned, that humanity which you betrayed, and that nature which you assailed in all its privileges.

Great God! I have accomplished my task. I have described infidelity in its real features. Such are its crimes. Anathema to that great corrupter of mankind, that mistress of every iniquity as well as of every falsehood—the offspring of hell, which has appeared upon earth with no other object than to overturn all order there, and to precipitate the infatuated human race towards their ruin. But, O Lord! whilst we execrate an odious doctrine, which is the poisoned source of all our calamities, we cannot avoid feeling the most lively compassion, and the most affectionate interest towards those whom it has seduced and misled. They are Thy children, purchased by the blood of Thy Son; suffer us, therefore, to implore Thy most abundant mercies on their behalf. How many are there amongst them,

* *Rousseau.*

who, instead of insulting and abandoning Thee, would love Thee, and bless Thy holy name, and make piety and virtue the source of all their happiness, if they had not the misfortune of having been born in the midst of the thick darkness which irreligion has scattered all around it, and of taking in fatal prejudices at the breast which nursed them, and of growing up amid the blasphemies and scandals of a perverse and infidel generation! How many are there amongst them who shudder at the consequences of a doctrine which they profess without a perfect knowledge of it. How many are there amongst them whom the natural uprightness of their hearts, and the impressive voice of their consciences, have been calling to Thee this long time past—who feel the necessity of adoring Thee, and living beneath Thy laws, but do not know how to dissipate the impostures which fascinate them, or to burst those oppressive chains which still hold them firmly bound to error! Oh, my God! take compassion upon their blindness and their weakness; send forth Thy light, Thy grace, and Thy strength. May they see the truth: may they relish it; may they embrace it courageously, and make it the rule of their lives for the time to come; so that, instead of being the deplorable victims of Thy vengeance, they may be the happy conquest of Thy grace—the glory of our ministry—our joy and our crown in that eternity of happiness, which I pray we may obtain, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! *Amen.*

SERMON THE THIRD.

MISERY OF THE INFIDEL.

NOTWITHSTANDING the folly and the guilt of the infidel, if he could at least obtain that imaginary happiness which he pursues, whilst he betrays his reason and conscience—if he could at least enjoy peace and happiness during this short life, to which all his desires are confined, whilst he renounces a blessed immortality, and consigns himself to everlasting punishment—although this would not make him more excusable, we may consider him less culpable, and we may recognise in the present and short-lived happiness which he enjoys, some inadequate compensation for the loss of the more precious and permanent goods which he had sacrificed to it. But, whilst he is the most foolish and the most guilty of mankind, if he be at the same time the most miserable—if his infidelity de-

prives him not only of all the hopes of the world to come, but also of the pleasures and true consolations of the present life, so as to make him experience nothing except its bitterness—if, in a word, the only advantage of his foolish and sacrilegious audacity is, to conduct him, through a life of anguish and suffering, to an eternity of despair—where shall we find words strong enough to describe the awful state of such a destiny, or pathetic enough to deplore such an excess of misery, as much as it deserves? However, my brethren, let us make the attempt; let compassion supply us with words at present, as indignation has supplied them on other occasions. Let us endeavour to move the unfortunate man to compassionate his own condition, by exhibiting it to his view without reserve. Ah! if our zeal has seemed severe to him, when we assailed his errors and unmasked his guilt, let our charity affect him now, when we come to weep over his misfortunes, and to point them out to him, in order that they may be healed. And you, my brethren, who have not been sharers in these pernicious errors, contemplate their frightful effects, so that a salutary fear may always preserve you from either danger, and strengthen you more and more in the wise and happy simplicity of faith.

All that I shall have to say to you in the present discourse is comprised in this expression of the Scriptures: *There is no peace to the wicked.** Consider this well, my brethren. The infidel, in his blindness, asserts, that the only means of being happy here below is to live without the knowledge of God upon earth. God takes him at his word, and abandons him; and as He is the only source of true felicity, no happiness can any longer exist for the infidel. In vain does he demand that happiness, of which he is so desirous, from every object that surrounds him; in vain does he strive to find it within himself; all creatures and his own heart join in concert with God in refusing it to him. Separated from Him who is the only true existence, light, and animation, the only joy of the soul, who, in a word, comprises all good, the only inheritance which remains for his share is, affliction, darkness, death, annihilation, and every evil. If he enters into himself, he encounters nothing in his heart but a chaos of conflicting passions and desires which oppose each other, and nothing in his conscience but agitation, terror, and remorse. If he suffers himself to wander abroad amongst exterior objects, he encounters nothing in the pleasures of the senses, but satiety and disgust; nothing

* *Isaias* xlviii. 22.

in the cares of avarice or ambition but bitter anxieties and disappointments; nothing in the society of his fellow-men but weariness and fatigue; nothing in the whole world but a frightful void; nothing in all nature but a silence which terrifies him, and something mysterious which rejects the enemy of God from every side, and leaves him a solitary being in the midst of the universe. Such is his destiny and, as it were, his anticipated hell. Such is also a brief sketch of the subject which I shall now propose for your consideration. It is the misery of the infidel.

O God, who art always merciful, even to Thy enemies, give strength and efficacy to my words, not that they should vainly dazzle the imagination, but that they may affect the heart—not that they may inspire the infidel with some evanescent fear, or extort from him a few unprofitable groans, but that they may convert him, and gain him over to Thee, so that by such means he may find and experience that happiness which he has lost by abandoning Thee. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I perceive three degrees in the misery of the infidel, or three deplorable effects of his irreligion; and I shall explain them in succession in the present discourse, to which I beg to solicit your attention.

I. Whatever may be the gifts which the infidel has received from nature and fortune—however happy and enviable his condition may seem to the rest of mankind—it is altogether destroyed by his irreligion. All that constitutes the charm of life, all that gives value to existence, is destroyed by that irreligion. To afford him such a lot as may gratify his desires, combine all the pleasures and all the possessions which a mortal is capable of enjoying upon this earth—place him under the brightest heaven, in some favoured clime, on which nature has lavished all her treasures, and where she displays her most delightful scenes; let him be surrounded by the most amiable and brilliant society; give him youth, health, riches, honours, pleasure, glory; add to all these enjoyments whatever else you please, and all will be unavailing for his happiness without religion. Why? Because, for the man who is destitute of religion, all nature is devoid of soul or animation; the society of his fellow-men possesses no enjoyment or attraction for him; and the combination of every pleasure, and every enjoyment, bears no proportion to the cravings of his heart.

I maintain, in the first place, that for the infidel all nature is devoid of soul or animation. Ah! my brethren, in the eyes of the religious man everything in this world is living and

animated; everything hears his voice and speaks to him in return; everything is endowed in his regard with intelligence and feeling. The heavens declare to me the glory and the power of that God whom I adore; the succession of day and night reveals His wisdom and His greatness; every season proclaims His munificence and contributes His favours. It is Himself, though invisible, that exhibits Himself to my view and my senses in a thousand different shapes, in every object that surrounds me. It is His light which shines in my eyes, when the rays of the sun enlighten me; it is His goodness smiles in the serenity of a lovely day. I enjoy His perfumes in the flower which embalms the air. It is His fertility that covers the earth with the harvest, and the fruits which His hand seems to present to me, and to invite me to collect them. Who but Himself could have taught the insect to provide for me that delicious honey, or bestow upon the flocks those rich fleeces which are destined to clothe me, and their abundant supply of milk to nourish me; or makes the countless tribes of animals so obedient to my will, or endows them with such wonderful and diversified instincts to render me the most useful services? Thus, all nature speaks to my heart, and shows me the benevolent influence of that omnipotent and bountiful Being who loves me, who condescends to feel a concern in my wants, and an interest even in my pleasures. Filled with admiration, gratitude, and love, I am forced to exclaim—"O God! how great is the beauty and perfection of Thy works! but how excessive is Thy care and concern for man! What favours must Thou not have in store for him in his heavenly country, whereas Thou art pleased to overwhelm him with Thy favours even now, in this place of exile and probation? O God! what must it not be to behold Thyself, unclouded and unobscured, upon a future day, when the sight of even the least of Thy works is sufficient to fill us with such ineffable delight." I sing the hymn of thanksgiving, and methinks all creatures repeat the same; methinks I hear them all uniting their voices with mine, and, under the influence of a common joy, that they form an unanimous concert in praise of their Creator.

The infidel is the only stranger to this universal harmony. Every thing is silent, every thing is dead for him alone. He has, as it were, deprived the world of that soul which endues it with animation. How is it possible that the most beautiful spectacles which nature exhibits, the most precious gifts which it bestows in such profusion, can speak to his heart, when he

can nowhere recognise intelligence, or design, or love—when he sees nothing but insensible matter, the combinations of accident, and blind fatality? The senseless observer of effects, without cause or regular motions, without a directing principle, of a magnificent whole, without a superintendent or an object, he soon grows weary of contemplating the vain decorations of an inanimate spectacle, and all those inexplicable games of chance which astonish his mind, without causing the slightest interest or emotion in his heart. The ungrateful possessor of so many favours, the giver of which he disregards—the unnatural child who disowns his benefactor and his Father—he feels none of those noble and delicious emotions which elevate and affect our souls, which charm our misery, and which constitute the value of all our enjoyments. Without God, he dries up and decays, as a flower fades and withers, when it is not visited by the rays of the sun, and when it is no longer watered by the dews of heaven.

Thus, for the infidel, all nature is devoid of soul or animation. I maintain, in the second place, that the society of his fellow-men possesses no enjoyment or attraction for him. Ah! I can understand how man can feel pleasure in an intercourse with his fellow-creatures—how he can be united to them by the ties of confidence and esteem, of a tender and mutual friendship, when he regards them as his brethren, as the children of the same God, whose image he respects and loves in them—as immortal beings destined to reign together in a blessed and eternal peace in the bosom of God Himself, after a short pilgrimage here below—when he recognises a moral law which binds consciences and secures mutual good faith, a rule of duty above every selfish consideration, and a precept of charity which cannot allow self-love to prevail over the love of the neighbour. In these pure and sublime ideas, which religion furnishes, I find all that can make a man dear and precious to his fellow-man, all that constitutes the link of social relations, the security of intercourse, and the pleasures of human friendship. But what attractions can society and all its enjoyments possess for him, who cannot regard man in any other light (I ask you, my brethren, to bear with the grossness of such revolting images) but as a plant which grows up, or a little clay furnished with certain organs through the caprice of accident, and which, when broken through some other caprice, must soon fall into its original dust and nothingness, out of which it shall never more arise; or as a vile animal which no essential attribute distinguishes from the brute creation, whose

reason is merely equivalent to their instinct, whose speech is nothing more than a modification of their cries, whose feelings and affections are mere sensations and appetites, whose virtuous or criminal actions are the only result of a material organization, or an indifferent system of mechanical contrivances—a being without liberty, without conscience, without duty, who obeys his physical inclinations through necessity, and having no hope for the future, follows the irresistible bias of present interest or pleasure? Figure to yourselves a society of men who entertained such sentiments with respect to each other. What pleasure or interest could they find in that union or relationship with which neither inclination nor free choice was associated—in which all that we style benevolence, affection, or union of hearts, was believed to be nothing more than mechanical impulse and blind instinct? What would be the foundation of mutual confidence and esteem, when there was no moral obligation, no distinction between justice and injustice, no law, no honesty, no restraint? What motive of mutual love could exist, when the only rule of action would be to love one's self, and to gratify one's self at all hazards? Accordingly, my brethren, if you consult the writings of our philosophic infidels, what dryness, what harshness, what savage contempt for the human race, what undisguised aversion to every obligation of natural, civil, or domestic society, will you not find in them. That man who has declaimed more than any of them about morality and virtue, whose pretended sensibility has been the subject of so much boasting, who has written upon the subjects of social agreement, on education, on maternal affection,* has not shuddered to assert (but I experience a profound horror at repeating such detestable paradoxes, and you, my brethren, must also tremble at hearing them) that a man has no more need of the rest of mankind than a wild beast has of his own species; that in the primitive and perfect state of nature, a son and his father are such strangers to each other, that if they met, they would not recognise each other; that a mother—O monstrous expression!—O sacred rights of nature disowned and blasphemed!—that a mother nurses her children to satisfy her own wants; and that as soon as they had strength to look for their own support, that she should abandon them and know them no longer. But let us not multiply these odious citations. Consider, my brethren, what ferocious misanthropy, what

* Rousseau. The horrible sentiments which are here referred to are extracted in a modified form from his works. The expressions are of so base a character, that they could not be literally translated.

savage selfishness such maxims as these must indicate; bear in mind, that they have been applauded with drunken frenzy by an unbelieving generation; and conclude whether I have been justified in asserting that the society of his fellow-men possesses no enjoyment or attraction for the enemy of religion.

What benefit or pleasure can possibly be enjoyed by the infidel, even when he is most favoured by the gifts of nature and fortune? I can imagine no others which he can possibly enjoy, except the pleasures of the senses, talents of mind, riches, honours, power, and glory. But, let him possess all these—let him be destitute of nothing that may seem capable of gratifying human sensuality, pride, and passion—and will he then be happy? No; because all goods that must perish, and all the pleasures of this world, bear no proportion to the cravings of his heart. There is nothing in this world, my brethren, so boundless as the heart of man. When God formed that heart after His own image, and for Himself, He impressed upon it the divine seal of His own immensity, as the first and most striking feature of that resemblance. He endowed it with desires that are insatiable and infinite, with hopes that tend to immortality, and with a love of good that is perfect and supreme; and He said to it, "Everything which surrounds thee, exists for thy benefit; but thy existence is for Me alone. Therefore have I placed within thee a capacity that knows no limits. As I have formed the mighty abyss of the ocean to receive the *gathering together of the waters*,* and the boundless expanse of the heavens to contain the innumerable bodies of light which roll above thy head, I have made thee greater than all these, that thou mayest receive and possess thy God. Thou shalt be ever empty until I approach and fill thee—ever hungry until I nourish and satiate thee with Myself—ever consuming with a burning thirst, until I flow into Thee as a torrent of delights, to quench that thirst, and to inebriate thee with my own happiness." Such, my brethren, is the nature, such the lofty destiny of the soul of each of us. Nothing less than God can ever satisfy that soul. An exile and a captive upon this earth, she goes about there in pursuit of that Sovereign Good of which she feels destitute; she calls upon all creatures to furnish it to her; and when she fails to find it, she soars in thought and desire above this visible creation; she ascends above the highest heavens, and outstrips the most distant limits of duration, that she may be united, at least in expectation,

* *Gen.* i. 10.

with that eternal, perfect, infinite Being, of whom she forms some conception, the want of whom she feels, and out of whom she can enjoy no happiness or repose.

And that object which is alone capable of satisfying her — for which alone she has been created—you would deprive her of that, O infidel! You would wrest from her that hope which constitutes her only true consolation. Although she is the daughter of Heaven, the heiress of immortality, who is so hungry and thirsty for that God who is her food and life, you would condemn her to crawl upon the dust of this earth, to feed upon it, to think that she is dust and ashes herself, to have no other prospect hereafter but death, putrefaction, and annihilation; and you say to her "Be happy." But, that she may be so, what do you give her in return for all you deprive her of?—what? Sensual pleasures? Is it?—Ah! She strives to glut herself with them to satiety; she buries herself in them; and she soon exclaims, "They are all filth! I cannot endure the infection and the infamy of such degrading enjoyments. The more I endeavour to satiate myself with them, the greater disgust do they cause me; according as I plunge the more deeply into them, they only impress a fouler defilement upon me. They become altogether insipid to me, and I am become an abomination to myself."

What else would you give her? Riches? Ah, she amasses heaps of a paltry metal; she multiplies her lands, her palaces, her equipages, her seats of pleasure; and what has she gained after all? "Oh, illusion!" she exclaims—"I have filled my coffers—yet I remain empty; I have multiplied my perplexities and disquiet far more than my possessions or my treasures; I must endure anxieties which the poor man knows nothing of; and I am a stranger to that peace and contentment which he often enjoys in the depths of his misery."

Oh, then, here are titles, dignities, decorations and honours—"Ah! they are mere children's toys. I have amused myself with them for a moment; but I have grown weary of them. While I lived in expectation of them, I thought they were something great; but, as soon as I obtained them I found that they were only glittering trifles."

Well, then—celebrity of name; a far-famed renown; the glory which attends great talents, learning, and genius—"Ah! that is all smoke. It has puffed up my heart, but it has afforded it no substantial benefit; it only excites the thirst of my pride instead of appeasing it; it makes me more restless, but not more happy."

Well, then—the laurels of war, victories, sceptres, crowns, the government of the universe—"Ah! by desolating the earth, I have done a great deal for the misfortune of other men, and nothing for my own happiness. Though I should gain a hundred kingdoms, or even the whole world, I should still look out for other worlds to conquer; and so far from having filled up the abyss which is within me, I have only sunk farther in its depths, and more clearly convinced myself that it is unfathomable."

And even in our days, my dear brethren, have we not beheld rich and powerful men, famous conquerors, who had arisen from the dust, and were afterwards seated upon thrones, and ruled over nations, and even over kings, and filled the world with the celebrity and the terror of their name? Has any one ever seen them at rest in the midst of so much prosperity? Could any one believe them to be happy? Did not black melancholy, as it were, sit enthroned upon their livid brow? Did their restless ambition leave them even a moment for repose or enjoyment? Did it not, like a burning goad, drive them on without intermission, in their wild phrenzy, from one enterprise to another, till they reached that abyss in which they were suddenly swallowed up, along with all their vast designs, their formidable power, and their vain glory?

Let us not reproach our heart for being insatiable. It ought to be so. The whole creation is incapable of filling up the void which is within it. Its desires, which are always springing up anew, are the cravings of an enormous want, by which it looks for the only perfect and infinite good—the only food which is adapted to its nature, and the only one which is able to appease its wants. If we withhold that from it, and give it mere perishable and finite goods, which are but nothing, to satisfy its desires, its ever-increasing hunger, finding nothing to satisfy it, is driven to rage and despair; and this miserable heart, which is in a state of total destitution, falling back upon itself, tears and devours itself, as a famished man is seen to tear and devour his own body.

Thus, every source of happiness is dried up for the infidel; because for him all nature is devoid of soul or animation; the society of his fellow-men possesses no enjoyment or attraction for him; and the combination of every pleasure and every enjoyment bears no proportion to the cravings of his heart. This is the first degree of his misery.

II.—The second degree of the misery of the infidel, or the second deplorable effect of his irreligion is, that it delivers up

his heart undefended to its most cruel enemies and its most unmerciful executioners—its passions, its remorse, and the terrors of a future state.

Man has no enemies more dangerous than his own passions. If he does not overcome them, and bring them completely under his control, he becomes the victim and the prey of all the monsters which are the offspring of his own heart: pride, envy, rage, hatred, vengeance, avarice, ambition, and brutal sensuality, wage an intestine war within his heart, and do not leave him the least repose. That heart experiences a succession, and a continual conflict of desires, aversions, fears, hopes, foolish joys, bitter afflictions, vexations, disgust, and caprice, which beat against each other like the waves of an angry sea, and, in their fury, agitate, torment, elevate and humble the heart, dash it against many a rock, and cause many an abyss to yawn beneath it.

Accordingly, when God wished to punish the proud philosophers of paganism, who went, in defiance of their reason and their conscience, and refused to recognise Him, and to glorify Him as God, how did He treat them? He delivered them up, as St. Paul assures us, not to the cruelty of tyrants, nor to the ferocity of wild beasts, nor to the fury of the elements, but to enemies far more terrible—to themselves, to their passions, to the desires of their own hearts. *Tradidit illos Deus in passiones.** *Tradidit illos in desideria cordis eorum.*† From that time, borne on by the violence of their disordered inclinations, they indulged in the commission of such strange disorders, and overwhelmed themselves with such ignominy and reproach, that the sovereign majesty was sufficiently vindicated by the manner in which they acted against themselves. *Mercedem quam oportuit erroris sui in semetipsis recipientes.*‡

Is it not manifest that a like malediction has struck the infidel philosophers of our own days? Scarce had they given the signal of their revolt against God, than, having been suddenly seized with the madness of every passion, and agitated by them as by so many furies, they inflicted more evils upon themselves than their most merciless enemies would have been able to inflict. Not content with dishonouring themselves in secret by the most infamous vices, they proclaimed their own infamy with a degree of furious emulation; they employed

* "He delivered them up to shameful affections."—*Rom.* i. 26.

† "He gave them up to the desires of their heart."—*Ibid.* 24.

‡ "Receiving in themselves the recompense which was due to their error."—*Ibid.* 27.

every means which could acquire celebrity for it; and, in well-known publications, displayed the turpitude and the abominations of their life before the eyes of the world and of posterity, so that they left no means to those who may be disposed to defend their memory at some future period. *Tradidit illos in passiones.*

How great was the agitation of their hearts, and what violent rage must have possessed them, when, tearing each other asunder—pouring forth torrents of bitterness and gall from their pens—assailing all things, divine and human—threatening, in the excess of their frenzy, to climb the very heavens—unable to endure order, or decency, or peace upon earth—breathing discord, exciting wars, seditions, and murders—they distinctly acknowledged that they could find no contentment or repose, except in the destruction of the universe! Can there be the least doubt that such men have been unhappy? And, even if they had not confessed it themselves—if the sage of Ferney had never assured us that his life had been (O wonderful expression!) "a perpetual nightmare"—if we were ignorant of the dark agony into which the sophist of Geneva fell, and the tragic end to which it led him—if the other chiefs of this impious confederacy had not so often cursed their fate, and sometimes, in their rage, cut short the thread of existence—would it not be enough to know the vile and odious passions to which they were abandoned, in order to learn what they had to endure from such tormentors? *Tradidit illos in passiones.*

The age which they perverted, having been a sharer in their iniquity, deserved to share their punishment. God has beheld the nations intoxicated with pride and licentiousness boldly rising in rebellion against Him, and disdainfully shaking off the yoke of His holy religion; He has beheld them, and in His wrath He has delivered them up to the unbridled passions of licentiousness and independence which no limits were able to restrain. Universal confusion at once gains uncontrolled dominion; society is dismembered: citizens slaughter each other; the throne is overturned, and a thousand scaffolds occupy its place; cities become vast prisons, in which multitudes of captives tremulously await their final doom; the whole earth becomes an immense grave, whose jaws are ever open to swallow up mankind; desolation, terror, and carnage, riot everywhere; passion let loose, has been the cause of all. *Tradidit illos in passiones.*

After such an awful lesson, God has seen the people still

hardened in their unbelief; and He has consigned them to the rage of battles and conquests. They seize up arms, they run amidst shouts of triumph to destruction and death; millions of human victims are sacrificed to a vain idol of glory; every land is flooded and every sea is crimsoned with the blood of warriors; great and countless hosts, the most famous and the most formidable that this world has ever beheld, are buried, some in the burning sands of Africa, and others in the ice and snow of the north. *Tradidit illos in passiones.*

Oh, my God! how many other passions besides these have become the too faithful ministers of Thy vengeance, ever since Thou hast been pleased to entrust them with the punishment of our crimes! The demon of voluptuousness, who is no less destructive than the demon of war, has breathed his impure and devouring fire into the hearts of men. Whole generations have been withered in their bloom, and others may, perhaps, be crushed in the bud, by an alarming and unprecedented corruption of morals. No age of innocence or modesty exists amongst us any longer. Infancy is practised in iniquity, and makes itself the victim of precocious vices; youth, wasted by dissipation, and entering the career of life with senses blunted and enfeebled, brings to it universal satiety and disgust; mature age has become the season of every excess; even old age sets shame at defiance; marriage has lost its sacred character; the laws which preserve human society are violated, and the designs of nature frustrated; infamous disorders shorten the days of the greater part of mankind; infirmities, loaded with an infamy which had been unknown to less guilty ages—diseases which are the disgrace of mankind, multiply alarming deaths, and cause more destruction than pestilence or famine; the souls of men are blasted and degraded, their bodies enervated, the principle of life everywhere disordered, the blood corrupted in every vein; universal waste and ruin is brought on by the poison of the most fatal, as well as the most ignominious, of all passions, that very passion which an abominable philosophy has represented as the source of all happiness, and the motive which impels to every good. *Tradidit illos in passiones.*

How great a scourge is the insatiable avarice, the desire of wealth and elevation, which torments the hearts of all—which makes the demands of wealth and luxury become indispensable wants for the multitude—which leaves no one contented with his lot—which gives rise to the most hazardous speculations, the most reckless enterprises, and often to the most de-

testable crimes, in order to better that condition—which flings so many fortunes into the abyss of gaming, stock-jobbing, and usury—which produces remarkable bankruptcies, and, consequently, despair, catastrophes, and suicides—which has almost entirely banished all honesty, and confidence, and security, as well as all disinterestedness, from the dealings of men—which has made us familiar not only with fraud and rapine, but even with assassinations—which day after day leads to a dreadful end, and even to the scaffold, thousands of unfortunate wretches, whom the thirst of gold has disposed to the commission of every crime. *Tradidit illos in passiones.*

But who could enumerate all the calamities which our passions have caused us ever since our irreligion has thrown off the only restraint which was able to hold them in subjection! Ah! our fathers were Christians; and as they were taught by the Gospel to moderate their passions, they lived in peace. But as we have abandoned all religion, and abjured every Gospel except our own caprice, we have become the voluntary slaves and adorers of our passions; and by a just retribution, these new deities, which we have created for ourselves, have vindicated against us the cause of that true God whom we have abandoned. *Mercedem quam oportuit erroris sui in semetipsis recipientes.*

When the passions are gratified, remorse is sure to follow. I need not inform you, my brethren, that remorse is the dread of that punishment which is inevitable to the wicked—when all mankind are unanimous in that opinion—when barbarous tribes as well as civilized nations, and pagan authors as well as our own inspired writers, make use of the very same language in its regard—when profane poets so forcibly describe it as a vulture, which cleaves to the entrails of the guilty, in order to devour them—as a fury, armed with torches and bloody scourges, which pursues its victim every where—when we have more than once beheld unhappy criminals, overcome by the violence of this secret torture, making an offering of themselves to offended justice, imploring the severity of the laws as a favour, and flinging themselves into the arms of the executioners, that by such means they may escape the terrors of their own consciences.

It must, however, be admitted, that remorse is often a grace and a means of salvation for the sinner who has preserved the faith, because it excites a salutary dread within his heart, and leads him from fear to repentance, and from repentance to forgiveness; and such are the means by which conversions are

daily effected. But the remorse of the infidel—the determined and obstinate infidel—is the remorse of despair, the remorse of devils and the reprobate, the worm which never dies, but devours eternally; for the only means whereby he could tear away this gnawing worm from his bosom, would be to humble himself beneath the hand which chastises him, to abjure his error, and become reconciled with Heaven; but, determined as he is to persevere in his irreligion, he cannot be blessed with such dispositions; his worm is, therefore, incurable, and here is his hell begun. What does it avail him to reason against the anguish which corrodes his heart, and to array sophisms in opposition to torments which are but too real? Like those senseless Stoics, who in the midst of the most cruel sufferings, obstinately persisted in denying the existence of pain, he will continue to deny that remorse exists, even whilst it devours him; he will discard it as a vain and groundless prejudice. But what does that avail him, if it be a prejudice which no philosophy, no impiety is able to subdue—a prejudice more tormenting to him than any which the wheel or the rack could inflict—a prejudice which poisons all his pleasures, which drives him to desolation and despair, which often tempts him to put an end to his existence? What does it avail him to avoid as much as possible the view of every object that could excite his remorse—to shun the sight of temples, of altars, of sacred ministers, and persons consecrated to the service of religion? Can he escape from the all-seeing eye of God, who is everywhere, even within him; who has established a tribunal within his conscience, and who forces its sting into his heart? He will endeavour to kick against this terrible goad, and to stifle remorse by dint of blasphemies: but the reprobates in hell also blaspheme eternally, and all they gain by their blasphemies is an aggravation of their torment. Unable to escape from such a calamity, he will endeavour to derive a terrible consolation from that very calamity, by increasing the number of criminals and wretches who may resemble himself; he will become a propagator of atheism, and make the most violent efforts to excite the world to a revolt against heaven. Alas! such has been the occupation of the devils for the last six thousand years; and the only benefit which they derive from it is to augment their despair whilst they augment their guilt, and to add fresh fuel to the fire of divine justice which consumes them.

Infidel! say not that it is of no avail to speak to you of hell and everlasting punishment, as you do not believe that such things exist, and as you even despise them. That is a mere

falsehood, which your vanity suggests; for, in reality, the terror of that hell pursues you; and there is not a being in the whole universe who is more tormented by the fear of hell than the infidel. Strange infatuation! to endeavour to persuade one's self that to say "I fear nothing," is sufficient to make us stand forth undaunted in the most manifest and alarming dangers! How can any reasonable being, when threatened with the most dreadful of all calamities, find ease of mind, without some solid motive which may allay his fears? But what motive have you? Does it seem to be so evident to your mind that there is no God? or, if there be a God, that He is indifferent to vice and virtue; or that He is deficient in power to punish those who presume to wage an open war against Him? or that, after having patiently endured their daring guilt during the whole course of their lives, He will not reserve for Himself an eternity to punish it? Show me a single individual amongst all your masters, amongst all your oracles of impiety, who has not acknowledged his uncertainty and alarm upon this subject in some portion or another of his works. Epicurus and Lucretius, the notorious atheists of antiquity, have expressly acknowledged this uncertainty; our well-known sophists of more recent times have repeated the same admission. What assurance can you have that they did not feel its force? what grounds can you possibly have to justify any such assurance? We may easily conceive how the religious man can live in that humble confidence which can moderate or dispel his fears; he has secured for himself a friend in that God who is to judge him; he adores Him; he observes His law, and strives to obtain His rewards, in order that he may not fear his punishments. This is true wisdom; this is to obtain the means of security. But let senseless man confront the Almighty, let a feeble mortal provoke the Sovereign Lord of the universe to the conflict; and when the thunder rolls above his head, let him dare to assert that he feels no alarm, as if he could be victorious in such a contest. It would be a piece of insolent madness; it would be the most extravagant and senseless boast that has ever been heard of; and if such a man has not lost his reason altogether, it is impossible that those audacious words upon his lips should be unaccompanied with terror in his heart.

My brethren, their conduct manifestly proves that the infidels tremble; for what can be the cause of this wonderful antipathy for all religion? If they feel no alarm, why not allow it to rest in peace? and why not rest in peace themselves? What is the object of these endless declamations, of these atro-

cious calumnies and outbursts of rage, which never cease to resound against it? What is the object of this inundation of impious works and furious libels, which aim at nothing but to render odious, and to devote it to the sword once more? What is the object of these factions, these conspiracies, these extensive confederacies and secret assemblies, who acknowledge their disposition to destroy it? what is the object of these horrible oaths, by which they bind themselves to spare no effort which may tend to make it disappear from off the face of the earth? and these cabals, the leading article of whose constitution is the extermination of the priesthood, and the extinction of Christianity? If they be sufficiently fortified against its denunciations, how could so much hatred be called forth by the religion of their country and their fathers—by this religion in which they have been born, and which has received the vows of their childhood? They conceive it to be an error! Admitting that they do, are there not many other errors in the world which do not cause them the slightest trouble? Besides, they admit it to be an error, which is not only harmless, but even useful, and sacred, and necessary for the public weal, and more efficacious than laws in preventing vice and inculcating virtue; and what is there in all this which can excite so much resentment? Are they afraid of inquisitions in those days, when no inquisitions are held except against religion herself? Do they thirst for her riches, now that she is left naked and destitute of all she ever possessed? Do they really take umbrage at her power, when she is no longer scarce able to defend herself, and when every one is allowed to oppress and insult her with impunity? Her power, when she is only just escaping from prisons and hiding-places—still encumbered with those chains which she had borne so long, and which she could not sever; when she is only just now descending, maimed and torn, from those scaffolds which she had so long deluged with her blood; when she is only now returning, the mere shadow of what she once had been, from the depths of tombs and caverns, retaining nothing but her voice to relate her sorrows and to proclaim the truths of eternity. Such is the power against which these infidels are so furiously enraged. Yes, my brethren; and we must not feel surprised at it. That voice is in reality a formidable voice for them after all. It is a voice which has been heard for the last six thousand years—a voice which no persecution could ever silence—a voice which is too manifestly the voice of God Himself, and which proclaims His justice and His vengeance with such a tone of authority. The

terror with which that voice inspires the enemies of truth, is the cause of all their fury. That terror has given rise to the revolution which we have just witnessed, and impels its authors to concert others anew. As long as a vestige of Christianity shall remain upon earth, hell and all its emissaries will rage, and shake the foundations of the world, in order to overturn that edifice which has been erected by God's own hands. But God Himself has sworn that their efforts will be unavailing; and sixty centuries of triumph are a guarantee to the Church for victories yet to come.

Consider, then, unfortunate infidel, the conflict in which you are engaged. You are in open war with heaven. God must either cease to exist, or be overcome by you; or else you must perish for all eternity, unless you be converted. What hope can you enjoy in such a frightful alternative? Ah! is it not far too much to be obliged to suffer the tyranny of your passions, and the torment of your remorse, and the expectation of a never-ending punishment! Can there be a destiny more terrible than yours?

III.—The third degree of the misery of the infidel, and the last deplorable effect of his irreligion, to which I shall now briefly direct your attention, is, that it leaves him without consolation in the ordinary and inevitable afflictions of this life, and without a remedy against despair, in extraordinary calamities and great misfortunes.

When the infidel brings down the awful vengeance of a future world upon his head, he acquires no privilege to exempt him from ordinary accidents, from the annoyances and afflictions of the present life. He is exposed, in common with the Christian, to many disappointments and reverses of fortune, to the loss of friends and relatives, to infirmity, disease, and death. But, how striking is the contrast between the Christian and the infidel, as far as regards the consolations which the former must derive from the opinions and doctrines which he professes! The Christian, not placing his happiness upon this fleeting life—regarding it merely as a period of trial, during which he is obliged to purchase favours which are eternal and infinite in their value, at the cost of momentary sacrifices and afflictions—looks upon the trials which he endures as the favours of an affectionate and paternal providence, which allows him such means of expiating his transgressions, and of obtaining that never-ending happiness to which he aspires. He is consoled by the reflection that such salutary rigours purify his soul from the slightest defilement, and render him more and more

acceptable in the sight of God. He even loves them as happy features of that resemblance which he bears to his crucified Saviour, whom he adores, and in whom he has placed all his confidence. The ardour of his charity and the sincerity of his faith is often so intense as to change all his grief into joy, and all his lamentations into hymns of thanksgiving. Behold the Apostle oppressed by every species of adversity and affliction; do you hear him give expression to the slightest murmur or complaint? "Blessed for ever be the God of all consolation," he exclaims, "who, amid so much affliction, has made me enjoy such ineffable consolation." *Benedictus Deus consolationis qui consolatur nos.** "Tribulations abound, it is true, but heavenly joy abounded exceedingly, and fills the whole capacity of my heart." *Superabundo gaudio . . . . . repletus sum.*† "Men and elements unite in assailing me." *Foris pugnæ.*‡ "Dangers and fears beset me." *Intus timores.*§ "But a delicious peace dwells in the bottom of my heart, and while the flesh is humbled the spirit rejoiceth with perpetual gladnesss." *Superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione nostra.*‖ Thus it is that by the unction of Divine grace, and the living hope of future benefits, the most feeling afflictions are more acceptable to the true Christian than dangerous prosperity and all the treacherous pleasures and enjoyments of the present life.

But what becomes of the infidel who sees nothing beyond this perishable world, who knows no other happiness but whatever may be derived from riches, honours, and pleasures here below, when all these abandon him on a sudden—when a notable reverse has demolished his fortune—when, in the pursuit of glory, he has encountered nothing but humiliation and reproach—when he is nailed down by old age or infirmity upon a sick bed, oppressed by physical weakness and overwhelming anguish of spirit—when all that he feels from his body are the torments which it occasions, and instead of pleasures and enjoyments, he can only expect cruel privations and sufferings ever multiplied until his expiring sigh? The unhappy man has lost all that his heart cherished, all that he had ever regarded as blessings, all that he had preferred to his conscience, and to eternity itself. At this moment all the fruit of his anxieties, of his labours, perhaps, of his crimes, vanishes from his grasp. All his hopes prove themselves to have been illusions and vain conceits. All his happiness has vanished like a dream, and left no-

* 2 *Cor.* i. 3, 4. † *Ibid.* vii. 4. ‡ *Ibid.* 5. § *Ibid.* ‖ *Ibid.* 4.

thing behind but the recollection of a prosperity which exists no longer, with the painful consciousness of present evil, and the excruciating fear of a more dreadful state hereafter. What consolation can he derive, in that awful moment, from the reflection that he is the sport of a blind chance, or the victim of an inexorable fatality, or that, perhaps, he is —and how can he be certain that he is not?—pursued with the wrath of a just God whom he has offended, and who is now about to punish his transgression? Ah! in his despair, he shall curse the day of his birth; in his senseless malice he shall complain of some inexplicable and imaginary fatality which he accuses of his disgrace, or pour forth blasphemies and imprecations against the true divinity, whose power he recognises when it is too late, in the stroke which crushes him. Where shall we find words adequate to represent such a frightful situation, the black thought of his mind, the profound desolation of his heart, the agonizing fears of a soul which is on the point of falling into hell?

Let us now contemplate the Christian and the infidel in trying circumstances of a different kind. Let us suppose each of them to possess an affectionate attachment to a spouse, a mother, an only son, of whom death deprives them. Let us suppose that nature suffers an equal pang in the breasts of each; that the heart of both one and the other is torn alike by the most violent and most poignant anguish. See what support the Christian finds in his faith to prevent him from sinking beneath such a bitter infliction. What is the calamity which he deplores? It is a separation from a fondly cherished being whom he shall never again behold upon this earth, but who, nevertheless, still lives, who has gone to await him in a better world, whose soul is, perhaps, already in possession of supreme happiness, whose body will arise glorious and immortal, and to whom he shall be restored upon a future day, in that blessed country where death shall be no more, nor separation, nor tears, but where happiness will be ineffable and eternal. With such exalted and consoling thoughts, the grave loses all its terrors. We may go beside it to shed consoling tears. We have reason to respect the cold remains which are something more than vile dust, as they bear within them the seeds of immortality. We can feel ourselves as closely attached as ever to a once beloved and ever-living soul whom we expect to find again at the foot of the altars where we had so often prayed beside her, whom we contemplate in spirit, happy in the bosom of that God whom she had faithfully served upon earth, and whose intercession we may believe is capable of drawing down the blessings of Heaven

upon those whom she has left behind in this land of exile, and who are destined soon to follow her.

But what support can the infidel expect when, of all that he had so dearly loved, nothing is left but a hideous carcass? and when the exhalations of death compel him to have those mutilated remains removed, he is compelled thus to consider with himself—"Here, then, is the object of all my affections lost for ever! No return—no life—no hope! All that I value, all that I love is confined in that horrible coffin. It is there thy whole being is shut up, O son—O mother—O spouse! And this is the end of all. This affecting beauty with which I was so smitten—this heart which was so tender, so generous, so faithful, whose affection was the source of all my happiness—this disposition which was so amiable, whose amiability and ingenuousness delighted me—all these are changed into filth and corruption for ever. And as I myself must soon be delivered up to this corruption and to the same worms, I must contribute my share to augment this detestable mass of infection; and we shall be altogether the object of eternal aversion and disgust."

Oh, my brethren, how deeply is the lot of the infidel to be deplored, when he loses his friends and relatives, unless he has a heart as hard as adamant, as base as the clay in which he places his final end!

However, those afflicting incidents to which I have referred are only the ordinary trials of life; but there are also extraordinary misfortunes—catastrophes, the very thoughts of which must make us tremble with affright, but to which every man is nevertheless subject, and from which no wisdom or energy can defend him in certain circumstances which our Lord is pleased to allow. Of such circumstances, revolutions offer frequent and memorable instances. Do the present generation require to be told that the great, the wealthy, and the powerful may fall from the loftiest elevation to the dungeon's lowest depths; that the good and the bad may expire together in torments; that the religious man and the infidel have sometimes reddened the same scaffold with their blood? Now, if any one asks me what is capable of sustaining the righteous man, the faithful servant, in such a dreadful crisis, I shall feel no difficulty in answering that question. His support will be found in an humble submission to the ever adorable and ever bountiful designs of God—in the recollection of Jesus Christ, His humiliations and His sufferings—in the hope of a blessed eternity. This is the source from which he derives a firmness

which is superior to every outrage which is offered him, and to every sacrifice which he must sustain. If he must deliver his pure hands to the executioner, to be loaded with ignominious chains, and if nature recoils from such a conflict, he can be told—"Thus was bound the victim who was sacrificed for the salvation of the world—you must follow Him as your model." His hands are held forth at once to receive the chains. And if he must endure the death of malefactors, although conscious of his own integrity, he may be addressed in these words, "Child of the saints, behold the way; ascend to heaven;" and he will mount the fatal ladder with as much majesty as if he had laid his foot upon the steps of a throne. Thus it is that religion ennobles and sanctifies misfortune.

But upon what will the adept in infidelity, the disciple of scepticism and doubt, rest his hopes in circumstances which are so alarming to human nature? If he is oppressed by violence, if a victorious enemy, as it so frequently happens, crushes him with his power, loads him with irons, and condemns him to die in humiliation and torments, and that no earthly assistance is any longer left, where shall he take refuge from the despair which pursues him? Will he summon to his assistance matter, accident, and nothing, the deaf and dumb deities which can neither hear him nor give him a reply? Will he have the presumption of raising his eyes to heaven, where the God whom he has blasphemed, and the mere recollection of whom alarms him, more particularly dwells? Will he summon to his assistance that lying philosophy which has deceived him—which has promised him such an imaginary happiness in the passions which have hurried on his ruin, in the benefits and pleasures which exist no longer, in a life which must terminate in the most cruel punishment? Ah! this mistress of deception has nothing more to say to him: she has procured his ruin, and she now abandons him. But I am mistaken; she has one remedy to offer which is worthy of her. She approaches, holding the dagger in one hand, and poison in the other, and she says, with an insulting smile, "Take your choice—no hope is left for you. Every illusion is dissipated, and you now find yourself in the lowest depths of the abyss. Devote yourself to Death. Have no scruple about it; for I give you leave. My lessons have led my disciples to the consummation of despair, I communicate to them the last secret, by showing them how they may escape from the calamities of this life by taking refuge, by means of suicide, in hell."

Oh! barbarous and truly infernal philosophy, which precipi-

tates mankind into every species of error, to lead them from these errors to every sort of guilt, and which makes them afterwards fall into all the miseries of this life, that so they may be hurried away at last into the abyss of endless misery.

My brethren, I have concluded all that I proposed to say to you respecting infidelity. I have endeavoured to refute every claim which it put forward to merit our regard. It arrogated to itself a character of wisdom, and I have shown that it was foolish. It pretended to teach and to advocate every virtue, and I have shown that it inculcated nothing but vice. Finally, it endeavoured to persuade mankind that they could find happiness in its doctrines, and I have shown them that they could find nothing in them except misery and despair. May these truths be deeply felt by all; may they remove the mistaken views of those whom error misleads; may they induce others to rely more securely upon the sacred foundations of faith, and give us all the dispositions of being united together in the bosom of truth, by conformity of faith and virtue.

Grant, O my God, that my hearers, and above all, that this interesting younger portion of them may never yield to the seductive promises of this hypocritical wisdom—this most merciless enemy of the intelligent creature, which has been formed to Thy image. Ah, may they rather be deaf to its voice; may they refuse to partake of that poisoned chalice which it presents to them; and may they derive from the sources of truth and grace the only true consolations of the present life, and the only joys which will remain for all eternity. *Amen.*

PANEGYRICS OF THE SAINTS.

PANEGYRIC OF ST. PETER, PRINCE OF THE APOSTLES.

PREACHED IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH OF GENEVA, ON THE FEAST OF SS. PETER AND PAUL, 1815.

"Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—*Matt.* xvi. 18.

When panegyrists undertake to commend the heroes of this world, and the men whom this world styles great and illustrious, their natural qualities or perfections, the monuments of their genius, or the gifts which fortune gave them, furnish the chief subjects of such commendation. Men feel a pleasure in publishing their illustrious name and birth, the superiority of their rank, the dignities conferred on them, their rare and splendid talents, the extent and solidity of their knowledge, their natural magnanimity of soul, and that exalted courage which performs great exploits; for these are the most ordinary sources of their glory, and of their claims upon the admiration of other men. But it is my duty upon this day, and in presence of that altar, to eulogize a hero of a very different mould; and, I must confess, if we regard only the endowments which nature gave him, we shall find nothing but what is lowly, nothing but what is paltry and despicable, according to the notions of the world. For, what was this Simon, the son of Jona, who now is so well known, and so deeply venerated, under the name of Peter? Merely a poor fisherman, who supported himself by laborious industry, and whose only wealth consisted in his boat and nets—an ignorant unlettered man, who could not pretend to any knowledge—so simple and rude in intellect that the gospel declares his incapacity to comprehend the language of his Divine Master, whenever it rose above the level of the most ordinary comprehension—and, we must add, feeble and faltering in spirit, trembling at the smallest danger, terrified by the voice of a servant-maid, so as even to fall into an act of most cowardly apostacy.

Such was Peter. Must we therefore think him inferior to those famous personages whose names are immortalized in history? No, my brethren; God forbid that we should. On the contrary, we confidently assert that he surpasses them, as far as the heavens are above the earth, or as far as the miracles of grace exceed the operations of nature. For, what is all the greatness and glory of this world when compared with that to which our Apostle was elevated, when the grace of God transformed him into a new creature? The Holy Spirit is communicated to his soul, and that man, once so poor, is suddenly enriched with all the abundance of Heaven's treasures; that man, once so ignorant, becomes master of every science, and speaks every language of the universe, and amazes and confounds the philosophers and sages of Greece, of Egypt, and of Rome, by the extent and sublimity of his knowledge; that intellect, once so dark and gross, is now filled with a heavenly illumination, and penetrates the depth of mysteries too far beyond the reach of this world's wisdom, and diffuses a light which dazzles the universe, and converts it to the truth; that man who had the weakness to deny his Master at the voice of a poor servant-maid, now, when invested with a power from above, makes the judges and princes of the people tremble upon their tribunals, proudly reproaches them with having crucified the Holy One and the Just, despises threats and insults, hurls defiance at the heads of tyrants; and cheerfully prepares to suffer the most agonising tortures; that man, who was once destitute of authority, reputation, or fortune, now acquires a power, surpassing all the power of kings: he becomes the conqueror of nations, commands nature to obey his voice, takes away life, or restores it to the dead, by a single word, and heals the sick by a power attached to his passing shadow; that man who was once so obscure and unknown, now fills the earth with the glory of his name: and that name will be celebrated in our pulpits, and honoured with every mark of public veneration, whilst the everlasting Church of Jesus Christ shall last.

How abject is the insignificance upon one side, my brethren! but how august is the glory upon the other! and how magnificent is the picture which I might now unfold to your view, if I described all the characteristics which constitute the glory of St. Peter. But they are all included in one—in the indissoluble union which our Saviour established between Peter and the Church, which He has founded upon him. By virtue of that union, all the greatness and glory of the Church is also the greatness and glory of Peter; and therefore I shall not sepa-

rate what God has so closely joined together; I shall consider our Apostle first, as the head of that universal Church which embraces the whole world within its pale; secondly, as the centre of that Church which is essentially one, and incapable of admixture or division; and, thirdly, as the foundation of that imperishable Church which is to last to the end of ages. *Ave Maria*, &c.

I.—Peter is the head of the universal Church of Christ.

The great work which Jesus Christ came down on earth to accomplish was, the institution of His Church. In that Church were fulfilled the magnificent promises made to the ancient patriarchs, and so often repeated by the prophets. That Church was the posterity pointed out to Abraham, which should equal in number the stars of heaven, and the sands on the sea-shore*—the kingdom foretold to David, which would extend from the rising of the sun to the farthest limits of the going down thereof†—the holy and happy Jerusalem which would lay open her bosom to receive the plenitude of the nations—the true people of God spread throughout the world, who, from pole to pole, should offer to the Lord incense and a clean oblation.§ That great people, that immense family at first merely comprised the Apostles; but as God, after having created man gave him a helpmate, bidding him *increase and multiply, and fill the earth*; in like manner, Jesus Christ, after having chosen twelve Apostles, said to them, *Going, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*¶ And how rapid and wonderful were the effects which followed that command. It was heard by twelve poor fishermen, and they set out for the conquest of the world, without arms, without treasures, without help, without a guide to direct their steps. Ignorant of the laws and habits of the people to whom they were sent, and often scarce acquainted with their names, they traverse boundless territories, preaching the folly of the cross to the most polished and learned, as well as to the most fierce and barbarous nations. They are resisted every where; but, wondrous fact! they triumph every where too. At the mere sound of their voice, the empire of idolatry is shaken to its foundation; long cherished prejudices are dispelled, and false wisdom put to shame: pride, ambition, avarice and voluptuousness, the most violent and resistless passions of the human heart, soon give way in presence of some mys-

* *Gen.* xxii. 17. † *Ps.* ii. 8. ‡ *Isaias* ii. 3.
§ *Malach.* i. 11. ¶ *Gen.* i. 28. ¶ *Matt.* xxviii. 19.

terious power. Men listen to them, fall prostrate before them, and believe; they embrace the austerest virtues, they adore the Divine Crucified One; they are ready to lay down their very lives for the faith. At this amazing spectacle, at the report of this sudden revolution, Jews and gentiles rage; all that was great and mighty upon this earth were filled with amazement, agitation and alarm. *Ipsi videntes sic admirati sunt, conturbati sunt, commoti sunt.** The kings and princes, the priests and rulers of paganism, assemble together, and conspire against the ambassadors of the Lord and of His Christ;† they summon to their aid philosophers and statesmen, soldiers and executioners, torments and death itself. But all their efforts are unavailing. Nothing can obstruct the progress of those heralds of the new law—of those to whom it has been said, *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.*‡ They pursue and accomplish their progress through persecutions and dangers, as the sun begins and ends his course unimpeded by any obstacle. Believers and martyrs crowd around their footsteps; the altars of false gods are laid low; a Christian world arises upon the ruins of an idolatrous world; the Church fertilized by the blood of her children, grows in size and strength; and now she fills the east and the west, the dry land and the islands of the sea; and that glorious title which must abide with her for ever—which shall distinguish her from every other society throughout all time—the title of CATHOLIC CHURCH, is bestowed upon her by the Apostles themselves.

At the head of that society, which is still in an infant state, but already widely diffused, is Peter, the prince of the Apostles—Peter, whom the evangelists always place in the foremost rank—*Primus Simon qui dicitur Petrus*§—Peter, who received the command to feed the lambs and sheep‖—Peter, to whom such exalted prerogatives were promised by these momentous words: *I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.*¶ Peter, therefore, governs this great body of the Church as the representative and vicar of Jesus Christ. It is he who provides in the supper-room for the choice of an apostle, to replace the traitor Judas; it is he who presides at the first council, held at Jerusalem; he is the first to preach the gospel to the Jews, the

* "They saw and they wondered, they trembled and they were moved." *Ps.* xlvii. 6.

† *Ibid* ii. 2. ‡ *John* xx. 21. § *Matt.* x. 2.

‖ *John* xxi. 15, 17. ¶ *Matt.* xvi. 19.

first to confound the synagogue, the first to experience its fury; he baptizes Cornelius, the first gentile converted to the faith. He first establishes his see at Antioch, the first city in which the name of Christian was pronounced; he next removes to that proud city, the mistress of the world, to erect the throne of a spiritual kingdom which will extend far beyond the utmost limits of the Roman empire. Here is fixed the chair, which has ever been styled the chair of Peter, which he still occupies in the person of his successor, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years; here he still confirms his brethren,* even to our own days, and governs the Church, which is spread through every part of the earth, through the old world as well as the new, with an authority beloved and venerated by pastors and people.

Oh! how beautiful in her head, as well as in her members, is that Church of Jesus Christ, which has received the nations for her inheritance, and the uttermost limits of the earth for her possession, the holy spouse of the Saviour, the mother of God's children, the mistress of truth, the faithful guardian of the deposit of faith, the dispenser of the divine graces, and the heiress of the divine promises, my brethren! you who have been born her children, and nourished with the milk of her holiest doctrine, how highly should you not prize the happiness you now enjoy. How precious in your sight should be the glorious name of Catholic which you bear—as it is the name of the lawful spouse—as you cannot fear that you are the children of the adulteress nor of the handmaid. How happy should you feel in being enabled to say, as the primitive faithful proclaimed in the presence of the tyrants who forced them to expire in torments—"Christian is my name, and Catholic is my surname!" My brethren, it is indeed a glorious title. But we must maintain its dignity by the purity of our faith and the innocence of our morals, by unaffected zeal and piety. Remember that the Church to which we belong, is indebted for her propagation and glory to the constancy of the martyrs and the virtues of the saints whose mother she has been. She would never have triumphed over paganism, nor have brought the world under subjection to her sway, if the sanctity of her children had not been almost equally illustrious with the miracles of her Apostles. Her brightest days were those when Paul gave thanks to the Lord because the faith and piety of the faithful at Rome were made known throughout the whole world—when an incestuous man

* *Luke* xxii. 32.

amongst the brethren seemed an alarming event, and set the whole Church of Corinth in mourning—when the defenders of Christianity defied its enemies to point out a follower of Jesus Christ who was not a virtuous and upright man—when its very persecutors confessed that the lives of the faithful were above reproach, and that their religion was their only crime. Is this the case at the present day? Alas! how great is the difference between these holy times and ours. Are there not Christians at present who cause the name of Jesus Christ to be blasphemed? Do not the morals of Catholics too often dye the venerable brow of the Church with shame? Oh, Peter! oh, illustrious Apostle! where can we now find that chosen race, that holy nation, that purchased people,* of which thou hast spoken with so much satisfaction and regard, and which cost thee so much toil and blood? If thou didst appear on earth once more, would it be possible for thee to recognise us as thy children, as the descendants of those whose virtues and good works forced their very slanderers to silence? Upon this day, which is consecrated to thy memory, obtain for us from that God who crowned thee with such surpassing glory, that He may be pleased to revive amongst us the spirit which inspired our fathers. We ask no other favour, but that for the future we may be more worthy of having for our mother that universal Church of which thou hast been the head.

II. Peter is the head of that Church which is essentially one.

A glance at the Gospel is sufficient to convince any one that the Church must be essentially one. Its Divine Founder announces that truth clearly enough in these words: *Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; these also I must lead, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.*† But wishing to impress it deeply upon our souls, He repeats it in more impressive and affecting terms, when, at His last supper, and a few hours before His death, He addressed this prayer to His Father:—"Oh! heavenly Father, preserve in My name those whom Thou hast given Me, *that they may be one as* WE *also are* ONE." *Ut sint unum sicut et nos* ‡ And not content with this, He adds—*And not for them only*—that is to say, for His disciples—*do I pray, but for them also who, through their word shall believe in Me, that they all may be one as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me. Ut sint* § *consummati in unum et cognoscat mundus quia*

* 1 *Peter* ii. 9.
† *John* x. 16.
‡ *Ibid.* xvii. 22.
§ *Ibid.* 21.

tu me misisti. Hence, the unity of the Church is actually the image of that ineffable unity by which the Father and the Son are one and the self-same God. *Ut sint unum sicut et nos.* Therefore, as the Son has but one principle, which is the Father, so also the Church can have only one visible head, which is the representative of Jesus Christ; and as the Father has but one thought, and one word, which is His Son, or eternal WORD, so also the Church can have only one faith and one language, which must ever be unchanged: and all her children must be made perfect in unity. *Ut sint consummati in unum.* Which means that all the thoughts and opinions of all the faithful scattered all over the earth, must be united and identified in one perfect and marvellous unity of language and doctrine; and that wondrous harmony of so many intellects and dispositions, which form only one mind and one heart to glorify the God who thus united them, will be an unerring mark by which the world shall recognize that the Church has had Jesus Christ alone as her author and finisher, and that Jesus Christ has been sent by His Eternal Father. *Et cognoscat mundus quia tu me misisti.*

Christians! could we possibly recognize the institution of a universal Church devoid of unity, to be the work of Him who was specially sent from God, and uncreated wisdom Himself! An universal Church devoid of unity—an immense society composed of a multitude of sects differing from each other in faith, in morals, in discipline, and worship—one member of it adoring what another blasphemed—one trampling under foot what was most sacred in the eyes of the other—a multitude contradicting, reviling, and anathematizing each other—would not such a monstrous union seem to have been formed by the spirit of darkness, discord, and falsehood rather than by the God of peace, and love, and truth? If such be the idea we should form of the Church, why has St. Paul assured us that we—that all its members—form only one body and one soul! *Unum corpus et unus spiritus.* One body, and therefore possessing only one head, one voice, one language: and soul, and therefore actuated by only one feeling and one will. And why would the same Apostle have added, that there was but one faith and one baptism, as there is only one God? *Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma.** Can any thing be more expressive? But there is, perhaps, a still more conclusive

* *Ephes.* iv. 4.

argument. If the Church were not essentially one, both in government and doctrine, if we were composed of heterogeneous parts and discordant sects, I ask you, my brethren, how could Jesus Christ have said: *He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me*;* and again, *If any one will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.*† But how could it be possible to obey conflicting authorities, to accomplish opposite precepts, and to believe contradictory doctrines? How could any one follow Arius and Nestorius, and Eutychius, and Macedonius, and, at the same time, follow the Roman Church, which condemned them all? Jesus Christ assures us that *no man can serve two masters . either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will sustain the one and despise the other*;‡ and therefore He cannot have given us two masters of truth and justice to follow and obey. Hence, as He commands us to hear and to obey the Church, that Church must be essentially one; and when we profess to "believe in the holy Catholic Church," as we repeat the Apostles' Creed, we implicitly profess to believe in her unity, as it would be impossible to believe in her unless she were essentially ONE.

How delightful it is to contemplate that vast body of the universal Church, spread throughout the world, and preserving a perfect and unalterable unity in the immensity of its extension. I look to the farthest limits of Africa and Asia, to the icy regions of the north, and the farthest islands of the west, and every where I behold Catholics professing the same faith, partaking the same Sacraments, preserving the same traditions, venerating the same Scriptures, united by ties of the same communion, governed by the same maxims, and in the centre of the world; in Rome, formerly the seat of idolatry, but now of Christianity, I behold the ancient chair of St. Peter, upon which is seated the Prince of Pontiffs, the father of that great family, the pastor of that immense flock, extending his anxious care over so many vast countries, and uniting together beneath the same spiritual authority so many men and nations, who were strangers to each other, and differing in their laws, their language, and their habits. At such a spectacle I am forced to exclaim, Great God! this must indeed be Thy Church; for universality combined with unity cannot but be Thy work. Here, I recognise the fulfilment of the mysterious words of Thy Son, that *there shall be one fold and one Shepherd.*§ I now

* *Luke* x. 16. † *Matt.* xviii. 17. ‡ *Ibid.* vi. 24. § *John* x. 16.

perceive why He has said to Peter, *Feed my lambs, feed my sheep.** I need not ask what is that *city seated on a mountain,*† which is visible to every eye, and that *candle set on a candlestick,*‡ to diffuse its light around. That city, that light, is thyself, oh, Peter! it is thy sacred chair; it is Rome, conquered by thy labours, and consecrated by thy blood, which has become the centre and capital of the Christian world. I can also understand why that ancient people, who were a type and figure of the new, had but one temple, one law, one high priest. All these represent the Church with her admirable unity in her faith, in her sacrifice, in her priesthood, and in her great High Priest. Oh, holy Church! nothing could sever that glorious unity; multiplied heresies and schisms could never hurt it; thou hast said of all sects, "They are gone forth from me; they are not of me." Cut off and cast away from thee as they have been, they have no more impaired thy unity than the fall of a few branches impairs the unity of the trunk, or the separation of a few rivulets destroys the unity of the parent stream. True, thou dost deplore the fate of those wayward children who hasten onward to their destruction, when they tear themselves away from thy embrace; for thou always hast a mother's heart; thou callest them with tears and prayers to return; thou art ready to receive them with tenderness, and to reinstate them in every privilege, if they return to their Father's inheritance; but whether they return from their error, or persist in adhering to it, thou art, nevertheless, always one, thou art always the only well beloved spouse, the only depository of the divine mysteries, the only mother of all the living.

III.—Peter is the foundation of that Church which must last for ever.

There is no mark of the true Church more clearly pointed out in the prophecies than its perpetual duration: Daniel has represented it to us under the figure of a mighty kingdom to be established amid profane states, seeing all these pass away before its face, and falling upon the ruins of each other; but itself will never pass away, and must abide for ever. *Comminuet autem et consumet universa regna hæc, et ipsum stabit in æternum*§ Isaias, Ezekiel, and David employ the same language. But why should we dwell upon these ancient prophecies, when the promise of Jesus Christ Himself is so precise and emphatic? Our Divine Saviour, applauding the faith of

* *John* xxi. 15, 17. † *Matt.* v. 14. ‡ *Ibid.*

§ "It shall break in pieces, and shall consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand for ever."—*Daniel* ii. 44.

Simon, the head of the Apostles, who was after recognising Him as Christ the Son of the living God, said to him, *Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona;* but then, suddenly changing His language, and giving him a new name, as a mark of the new and exalted destiny prepared for him, He adds, *And I say to thee*—I, the Son of the living God, say to thee who has hitherto been called Simon—*that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** The whole argument is contained in these words. Jesus Christ will establish a church, of which Peter will be the foundation, and that Church shall last for ever, as hell, which will never cease to contend with it, will never be able to prevail against it; but, as the Church, founded on Peter, ought to be immortal. Peter must be immortal too; for the edifice cannot be more lasting than the foundation upon which it rests. Hence, Peter never dies; he is always living in his successors, as the holy fathers and councils have a thousand times proclaimed. His see, which nothing could ever shake, bears and supports the whole edifice of the Church from the beginning, and will continue to sustain it to the end of time.

During the eighteen hundred years through which that command has remained unaltered, how many revolutions have changed the aspect of this world! how many states, and kingdoms, and empires have disappeared from off the face of the earth! how many dynasties have been extinguished! how many famous nations are amongst the things of the past! how many sects and heresies have passed away like winter torrents! But the Church and the throne of Peter still remain; time, which consumes all earthly objects, has only added to their other attributes that of a more venerable antiquity; the storms of ages have only rooted them more deeply; and all the efforts of their enemies to destroy them have had no better success than to demonstrate more clearly that they cannot be destroyed.

But, O great God! how violent have these efforts been. Behold Peter himself, and all his early successors, stricken down by the sword of persecution. Behold Rome, deluged by the blood of its pontiffs, its priests, its saints, and its virgins during three whole centuries. Then contemplate how she has been rent by so many schisms which have carried away immense portions of Catholicity and seemed likely to break up Christian society into fragments. You remember how many plots and conspiracies have been formed in every age, how many

* *Matt.* xvi. 18.

sects have combined all their power and strength, how many kings and nations have arisen in arms, how many philosophers, and orators, and famous writers, have employed all the resources of learning and genius to overturn the deep foundations laid by a divine hand. But have they succeeded? have the gates of hell prevailed against them; No, my brethren; the Church, assailed by so many enemies, has ever remained unshaken; she rests calm and unmoved in the heat of battle as well as in the hour of peace, for she is always certain of the victory; and she sings the hymn with which she has been familiar even from the beginning. Well may she say, "Often have they fought against me from the days of my youth; but they have always fought in vain. My blood has been poured out from my very birth; I have lived and have grown old in conflicts; I am covered with glorious wounds, but I can never receive a mortal stroke." *Sæpe expugnaverunt me a juventute mea, et enim non potuerunt mihi.**

She repeats this hymn of security and triumph even to-day, after the most dreadful assaults she has ever been obliged to endure. My brethren, you yourselves have seen the whole world, within the last sixty years, arrayed against the Church and the chair of St. Peter. Impiety, after having prepared its poison and sharpened its weapons in the dark, came forth at length, from its subterranean caverns, and laid its work of darkness open to the light of day. Elated with the numbers marshalled beneath its colours, it was not by artifice and cunning, by secret plots and cowardly slanders, but by daring and open force it strove to conquer. The people are stirred up, and an awful revolution planned. The temples of the true God are overturned, His altars broken, the everlasting sacrifice suspended, and the ministers of the sanctuary consigned to every variety of death. The very centre of religion is invaded; the abomination of desolation is seen in the holy city; the sacred roof of the Vatican and of thy august basilica, O Peter, resound with impure blasphemies; thy patrimony, thy tomb, thy venerable chair, the places hallowed by thy martyrdom, and that of Paul, are profaned; two of thy successors are torn from their palace, now defiled with blood; they are dragged in captivity to a foreign land; one of them expires in irons; the other, wasted with pain and overwhelmed with a torrent of bitterness, seems ready to go down to the grave; triumphant impiety has forced the world to silence; kings and their sub

* *Ps.* cxxviii. 2.

jects are alarmed to contemplate its ravages, which no barrier can now restrain.

But is there now an end to all, O Lord? Must that Church which Thou hast founded on a rock, and to which Thou hast promised an endless duration, now perish at last? Will a new persecutor, more powerful or more skilful than Diocletian, Maxentius, Julian, or Mahomet, belie Thy oracles? An answer is unnecessary, my brethren; facts speaks distinctly enough; the strokes with which heaven has scourged us are more eloquent than any language of ours. You know where is that pontiff now who lately pined in captivity,* and what has become of all the power of his enemies. Events have resumed their accustomed course; the eternal decrees will reach their grand and final consummation; the voice of Peter will be heard in Rome as it always has been; the work of God is accomplished, and hell is put to shame once more.

Oh, great Apostle, thou art Peter, and upon that rock has been built the Church of Jesus Christ, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Let us, therefore, my brethren, love that Church whose destiny is such a glorious one; and overwhelmed with joy at the sight of those favours with which heaven has crowned her, let us exclaim with the prophet—*All that we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.* Yes; *it is God hath founded it for ever. Sicut audivimus sic vidimus in civitate Domini virtutum; Deus fundavit eam in æternum.*† Hasten to that holy Sion which the Lord protects and blesses; *surround and encompass her* with your reverence and love; bring your souls under subjection to her laws; *set your hearts on her strength:* make them receive the virtues which she inculcates. There is neither truth, nor happiness, nor lasting hope but in her bosom. *Circumdate Sion et complectimini eam; ponite corda vestra in virtute ejus.*‡ It is here alone, in that happy city, that the Lord dwelleth; it is there He has fixed His abode for ever and ever. This shall be our

* The venerable and illustrious Pius VII. having been released from his cruel and unjust captivity about a year and a-half before this sermon was preached, had, by this time, not only repaired the calamities which the Church sustained, but also contributed to restore it to its former splendour. His persecutor had just received a final overthrow—his defeat at Waterloo having occurred only ten days previous to this sermon; and at the very moment when the preacher was reminding his hearers of the holy father's miraculous restoration, the tyrant, who held him captive, was on the road to Malmaison, endeavouring to escape to America.

† *Ps.* xlvii. 9. ‡ *Ibid.* 13, 14.

country: and *He shall rule us for evermore. Quoniam hic est Deus. Deus noster in æternum; ipse reget nos in sæcula.** *Amen.*

PANEGYRIC OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSYSIUM.

PREACHED AT TOULOUSE, UPON THE FEAST OF SAINT FRANCIS, 4th OCTOBER, 1814, BEFORE THE MEMBERS OF THE ORDER OF SAINT CLAIRE, WHO HAD BEEN DEPRIVED OF THEIR CONVENT.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."—*Matt.* xvi. 24.

NOT one of the saints, my dear sisters, has more fully understood, or more faithfully practised this maxim of our Saviour than your glorious patron, whose memory is honoured by the Church to-day. St. Francis has been, indeed, a prodigy of penance, of self-renunciation, of suffering, and of a love of the cross. His very name has often been sufficient to terrify sensuality and voluptuousness, to suggest the sublimest views of evangelical perfection; it is identified with self-denial itself. In an age of laxity and indifference, St. Francis has revived the bright examples of the primitive ages, the miracles which formerly adorned the deserts of Egypt and Syria, and the superhuman virtues which compelled the pagans themselves to acknowledge the divinity of the Christian faith. He has been an anchorite, a cenobite, and an apostle. Like Pacomius and Benedict, he has had the glory of forming an almost countless multitude of disciples; he has become the father and the head of many august families of holy, religious, and fervent virgins, who have filled Europe, and have been perpetuated to these days of universal ruin; and of these, you, my dear sisters, are the sad but precious relics. You must feel consoled at hearing your blessed patriarch commended even by feeble lips; and the narrative of his virtues will not be a reproach to you; for you have never failed in your fidelity to his laws and maxims; and you have ever been actuated by his spirit. That spirit has not cleaved to the walls from which violence has banished you; but it has animated you who are the living stones of that spiritual edifice which he has erected. You could be torn from the retirement of the sanctuary, and scattered through the streets and public places in our cities; but you could never

* *Ps.* 15.

be deprived of the honour of your consecration to God, nor be made forgetful of your engagements to Him. You live in the world as much strangers to its vanities as if you were in the depths of your solitudes—as dead to its pleasures, but more exposed to its hardships and contempt—you live there, poorer than ever, perhaps—more sensibly abandoned to the care of Providence alone, more desolate, and therefore more worthy of the name you bear, as daughters of St. Francis. Hence, I need not fear that I may alarm you, by speaking of his poverty, his humility, and his mortification. You have taken him as your model in all these particulars; you are distinguished by the self-same characteristics; you bear, like him, though in a far less miraculous manner, the marks and sacred stigmas of a crucified God. All that I may propose to you in this discourse, will, doubtless, be sad and bitter to sensual and worldly souls; but it will supply you with motives of consolation, of encouragement, and a heavenly emulation; your zeal will burn with renovated ardour; your souls will be inflamed with the love of eternal goods, whilst I advert to the principal events in the life of that great saint, and endeavour to show you, first, with what treasures poverty has enriched him; secondly, what glory has been the reward of his humility; and thirdly, to what happiness he has been led by the austerest mortification of the senses and the spirit.

Oh, virgin mother of the Divine Redeemer, who wert the constant patroness of him whose panegyric I now undertake, who didst often obtain for him, and wert thyself sometimes the bearer of Heaven's most precious favours to him, vouchsafe to assist my efforts, not so much for his glory or for yours, as for the glory of God, who is the only author of every good gift, and who is admirable in all His works, but more particularly in the graces which He bestows upon His saints. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—All the promises of Jesus Christ must of necessity be fulfilled, because He is a God faithful to His promises, and unerring truth itself; and this divine Master has said in most express terms, *Every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess a crown of life.** Relying on that oracle, Francis did not imitate the wealthy young man in the Gospel, who, on being invited by our Saviour to sell all his possessions and distribute

* *Matt.* xix. 29.

them among the poor, went away sorrowful, and preferred the dross of this world to the friendship of the Son of God.* Our saint was more generous, and more obedient to grace, notwithstanding the obstacles with which his state of life and his early inclinations impeded the call from heaven. Born of a father who had grown rich in honourable commerce, he had conceived from his earliest years an inclination for the amusements of his age, and even for that luxury which flatters the ordinary vanity of youth, together with all the habits of an easy and agreeable life; at the same time, he felt a strong desire to preserve and to increase a fortune which he was one day to inherit, and which delighted his fancy, by the hopes it held out to him. These worldly inclinations were counterbalanced, from his earliest years, by a compassionate charity towards the poor; he never met one of them without readily giving him some consolation or relief; but, once, whilst his attention was distracted by some urgent business, he paid no attention to the wants of a poor man who besought some assistance. This inadvertence afterwards seemed an unpardonable offence: he instantly made a vow that he would never again, on any pretext whatsoever, turn away his attention from the miseries of his neighbour; and, even to his death, he remained faithful to that engagement. This tender sympathy for the poor was the source and the first principle of that love which he afterwards cherished for poverty itself, and of the perfection to which he elevated that virtue.

One day that he came out of the city of Assysium, well mounted and richly dressed, he saw a man whose nakedness was scarcely covered by a few rags. Moved at the sight, he stopped short, and without hesitation stripped off his clothes, which he exchanged for the wretched rags of this poor man. Such a generous action was speedily followed by its own reward. On the following night Francis was favoured by a mysterious dream, which announced the great designs of Heaven in his favour. Encouraged by that mark of the Divine regard, he pursued a habit which is looked upon as a rare and singular circumstance in the lives of some saints; he frequently stripped himself to clothe the naked. This charity drew down upon him such abundant graces, that he soon found no pleasure but in the society of the poor, with whom he sometimes associated, clothed in the same dress, sharing their coarse meals, and the ignominy attached to their condition. Who

* *Matt.* xvi. 16, 22.

can describe the consolations which he enjoyed in that state, bearing the livery of Jesus Christ, identified with living members of an annihilated God, and holding converse with the Angels of heaven, amid all that is vilest in the eyes of the world? We do not comprehend certain actions of the saints; the heroic virtues contain something to alarm and oppress our weakness, but they are most attractive and consoling for him who has fortitude enough to observe them, for even one of the divine consolations which accompany them infinitely transcends all the delights that we can comprehend.

Francis, now anxiously desirous of all that is revolting to nature and of all that may merit the divine favour, anxiously looks for every kind of misery. He feels himself particularly attracted to the hospitals; there he renders the most revolting and servile duties to the sick; he washes the feet of the lepers with his own hands; he bears in his arms those who were affected by contagious disease; and—I can hardly venture to say it, for the bare idea is most revolting to our sensibilities—he even cheerfully kisses the most disgusting ulcers.

Thus far, he has been only the benefactor, the friend, the associate, the servant of the poor; he must now become poor himself. Observe how Providence has brought about that new change. His father, provoked at the donation of a sum of money which Francis bestowed without his own consent, was carried away by the most violent passion; he loads him with reproaches and chastisement, beats him unmercifully, and imprisons him in a dark dungeon. Shortly after, he drags him before the bishop's tribunal; and, not content with the restitution of the amount bestowed, he wishes that his son should legally renounce all his property, and every claim upon his father's inheritance. At this time Francis was in the twenty-fifth year of his age. He clearly perceived all the consequences of the step which was required of him; he saw before him beggary with all its horrors; yet he did not hesitate one moment; he signed the required renunciation; he gave back to his father all that he had received from him, not even excepting the clothes which he wore; and, seeing his father still unappeased, he addressed him with a calm firmness and a mild fortitude, in these words, which drew tears from the bystanders—"Hitherto I have been able to style you my father; but now, what remains for me but to say, my Father, who art in heaven, in whom I centre all my treasure and all my hope." Behold him now in the bloom of youth, destitute of all property, deprived of all human aid, abandoned by all the world,

and left even naked, as his very clothes had been taken from him. The bishop, pitying his condition, threw over him the coarse cloak of one of his domestics; and Francis, now reduced to the condition of the beggars whom he so often relieved, having no longer a place on which to rest his head, not knowing whither to direct his steps, but filled with that inward joy which riches cannot give, goes forth blessing the Lord, and audibly singing forth his praises.

Thenceforth devoted to the most rigorous poverty, he tastes no other bread except the bread of alms. Oftentimes, when oppressed with hunger and cold, the most trifling relief was contemptuously refused him. Insults, the most bitter derision, and even the most cruel treatment, were often the only answers to his humble supplications. Unable to find a place on which to rest his head, he spent whole nights in caverns, or concealed amid the ruins of some deserted church, or in the fields, exposed to all the inclemency of the weather. Such was the life he led for three years, when one day hearing these words of the Gospel—*Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff,** he reproached himself with still possessing superfluities, threw away the stick and shoes which he had preserved hitherto, and even then scarce felt satisfied that he had completed the evangelical poverty. O God! who revealest Thy secrets to the little ones, and dost conceal them from the wise and prudent of this world, enable us to comprehend that heavenly folly of the cross, that insatiable hunger and thirst after sufferings and privations, that love of all this world fears, that contempt of all its esteems, those inclinations which are so contrary to nature, and the whole mystery of divine wisdom which is so incomprehensible to proud and sensual spirits. Illuminate our eyes with the light which shone upon St. Francis, when, in the transports of his love for poverty, he styled it his mistress, his queen, his spouse, his mother—when he addressed to our Saviour that surprising prayer, "O Jesus, who hast been pleased to live in the entire want of all things, grant me the dignity and the privilege of poverty, before all other graces; I desire to be enriched by this treasure; I ask it (observe these words, my sisters)—I ask it for myself and for all who are mine, so that for the glory of Thy sacred name we may never possess any thing under heaven, and that we may depend for our own very support upon the charity of others."

* *Matt.* x. 9, 10.

This enlightened man was well aware—and he declared it in his own simple and energetic language—that poverty is "the way of salvation, the nursing mother of humility, the source of perfection;" he knew what profound and mysterious meaning was contained in that single sentence of eternal wisdom—BLESSED ARE THE POOR! He learned from his own experience what is gained by losing all things for God's sake; what is found by leaving all things to devote one's self to Him without reserve, and to possess Him as our only treasure.

Let us contemplate, and let us endeavour to appreciate the exchange which St. Francis made. His earthly parents rejected him; he may truly say with the Psalmist, that his father and mother have forsaken him. *Pater meus, et mater mea dereliquerunt me.** But he may also add that the Lord hath adopted him as His favoured child. *Dominus autem assumpsit me.*† By the privilege of such glorious adoption, he experienced on the part of God all that a beloved son could expect from the most generous father and the most tender mother. When he invoked Him in his necessities, all his prayers were heard; when he had recourse to Him in his trials, consolations were lavished on him in abundance. He was driven, an outcast, from his father's roof; but he had his dwelling-place marked out in heaven, and the Lord Himself became his portion and inheritance. He divested himself of corruptible clothing, and he put on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; he possessed neither gold nor silver, but all the riches of heaven seemed placed at his disposal; and whilst he had no means, whilst he lived on what he begged from door to door, he effected more than all the resources of a splendid fortune would have enabled him to accomplish. Within two years he rebuilt three churches, and finished other more expensive undertakings. He had no house, no resting-place; but princesses, of royal blood, were seen to leave their palaces, and resign them to himself and his disciples; and, in a few years, his numerous children filled Italy, France, Spain, England, Ireland, Greece, and Africa with their establishments. Ten years after the institution of his order, he assembled together, in a general chapter, five thousand religious who formed but a part of his immense family. And thus, that man who wished to have neither wife nor children according to the flesh, became the spiritual father of a countless posterity of a whole people of the Lord's servants, who have borne his name, and caused it to be blessed even to our

* *Ps.* xxvi. 10. † *Ibid.*

own days—of a race beloved by God, which infidelity, after all its efforts, and all its power, has been unable to extinguish, even at the end of six hundred years, and which, springing from the ashes of those who have passed away, will probably last to the end of time.

Such was the reward of his sacrifices; such were the blessings bestowed upon his poverty: such was what I may term the fruitfulness and wealth of that universal destitution to which he freely condemned himself; and we have every reason to admire the exactness with which the wonderful prediction of Jesus Christ was fulfilled in his regard—that whosoever would renounce all that is precious and dear to nature for His sake, would receive brothers, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and houses, and lands, as a recompense, even in this world.

Therefore, my sisters, love that poverty which you, too, like Francis, have chosen for your inheritance, which you have espoused by your vows, in which alone you will seek your consolation, and find your treasure. Has not that same Providence, who has been so liberal towards your holy founder, kept His eyes constantly fixed upon your wants, ever since you have been banished from the cloister, as he was banished from his father's house? Have you ever been in want of a roof to shelter you, or the bread and clothing which satisfied your moderate wants? Whatever your privations may have been—and I am well aware of their magnitude and extent—has He who feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, neglected you even for a moment? If you have often been in want of food for the morrow, have not the necessaries of each day at least been hitherto supplied you by the providential care of God. Persevere in seeking His kingdom first, above all things, and all the rest will continue to be added unto you with increase; and despite the almost universal coldness of charity, there will still be found pious and benevolent souls who will not forget the poor afflicted spouses of Jesus Christ, and who will act as the ministers of His Divine liberality in your regard.

II.—It is a common maxim, and you are aware of its truth, my dear sisters, that humility is the foundation of true sanctity, and of every Christian perfection. Who, therefore, has ever been more perfect than St. Francis? Who has been more devoted to humiliation and reproach? Who has had a stronger disregard for dignities and honours? Who has more sincerely desired to be despised and forgotten? Who has had a more abject opinion of himself? But who, on the other hand, has ever

been more glorified by Him, whose word can never deceive, and who has declared that whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted? Francis, during the first years of his penitential life, consented to be, even in his native land, an object of ridicule—the butt and scorn of wanton youth, and of an insolent populace—an outcast and an offscouring from the world at large. His appearance was the signal for universal derision; the most insulting marks of contempt were not spared; and he may well complain with the prophet, that the bitter waters of reproach are come like a torrent into his soul.* He not only sustained this most grievous persecution courageously, and without a murmur, but he felt a pleasure in abjection, and rejoiced like the Apostles, because he was *accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus*;† and God, who exalteth the humble, willed that this man, who was so despised, should be afterwards honoured by kings and supreme pontiffs—that he should receive splendid proofs of the respect and veneration of whole nations—that men should even fall prostrate before him, to pay him, while yet alive, the homage which other saints did not obtain until after death. So great were the honours he received, that perhaps the strongest effort of his virtue was to preserve humility in the midst of all that was so strongly calculated to inspire him with pride. Upon such occasions he used to exclaim, "I refer this respect and these praises to God alone, to whom alone they are due; I take none of them to myself; I rather bury myself in my own meanness and insignificance." It was on such occasions that, filled with confusion and fear, he styled himself "a worm of the earth, the most unworthy of God's servants, and the last of sinners;" and what is most strange, he felt himself to be such in reality.

How can we feel surprised that, with such an opinion of himself, he wished never to ascend to the dignity of the priesthood? It was impossible to overcome his resistance in that respect; and although he was the head of an immense order, he always remained, through humility, in the rank of Levites. What have I said, O my God? and why have not shame and sorrow bound fast my tongue? Francis, one of the greatest saints that the Church commemorates, shrinks from the burden of the priesthood; and shall we, feeble reeds as we are, presume to bear it? Francis, who was familiarized with the divine communications—Francis, a prophet and a worker of

* *Ps.* lxviii. 1. † *Acts* v. 41.

miracles, trembles at the thought of ascending that altar, and of celebrating the awful mysteries, of which Angels are unworthy; and we, who are so devoid of heaven's light, and who crawl upon this earth—we who have mixed with the world so long, and who have, perhaps, brought away so much of its dust and mire—shall we enter, without terror, into the holy of holies? Shall we live undisturbed in the exercise of these awful functions, in which we occupy the place of Jesus Christ Himself, in which, O great God! we consecrate and offer in sacrifice His very body and blood? Are we presumptuous? or did Francis carry his humility and fearfulness to excess? O, precious humility, which more brightly reveals His glory! He was not invested with the divine powers which we receive along with the unction of the priesthood; but he exercised a dominion over souls, and swayed a power against hell which we possess not. Alas! priests as we are, where are the great fruits of our ministry, and of the grace which we have received by the imposition of hands? We distribute treasures of infinite value—but where are the souls they enrich? we announce the divine word with a tone of authority—but where are the sinners that are converted at our voice? Francis, though only a simple Levite, without letters or study, had only to appear, in order to rescue thousands of victims from the world, and make them fervent disciples of the cross. When he ascended the pulpit, he had no sooner saluted his auditors in these modest words, which were the ordinary opening of his discourse, "the peace of the Lord be with you," than every heart was softened, and every eye streamed with tears. Ah! my brethren, the success of preaching the Gospel does not depend upon the skill, or learning, or labour of man; all these, by themselves, may amuse the minds, and earn vain applause for a preacher; but what gains conversions, is the humility and sanctity of the preacher—his close union with God—the efficacy of his prayers—the fire of charity which burns within him, and communicates itself to the hearts of his hearers—and the living waters of grace, which flow like a torrent from his lips, and hurry everything before them in their onward course. Suppose, my sisters, that instead of me, you saw here the venerable man whose panegyric I strive to pronounce—that you saw his body, wasted by fasting, by vigils, by macerations, and by fatigue, bearing, like St. Paul, the mortification of Jesus Christ in all his members—his features wearing the impress of calm and modest gravity—his eyes sparkling with a heavenly fire, and bathed with tears of tenderness and sorrow—his penetrat-

ing voice, which sinks deep into the heart—his simple, energetic, efficacious words, which stir up the darkest depths of the conscience; suppose you saw him, and heard him for one moment, tell me, would such a preacher require the aid of human eloquence—I will not say, to move your hearts—but to affect and to reclaim the most hardened sinners? Such was Francis, as he appeared before the head and princes of the Roman Church, when they wished to hear this new Apostle, when, deeply moved by his discourse, they exclaimed with one accord, that it was as if a God had spoken. Was there ever a more glorious suffrage? But it was reserved for the most humble of all preachers.

It would seem as if God were pleased to contradict the humility of his servant in every respect. The most ardent desire of Francis was to live obscure and unknown among men; and God made him celebrated by the power of miracles, by the gift of prophecy, by the knowledge of the secrets of hearts, by wisdom in council, magnanimity in danger, and something supernatural in all his actions, which excited universal wonder and admiration. Thus, when he went in search of humiliation, or death itself, amongst pagans, for the name of Jesus Christ, he found even there, by a mysterious dispensation of Providence, the celebrity which he shunned. Why should we overlook such a beautiful and affecting event in the life of our saint? Driven by the fervour of his zeal to the coast of Africa, at a time when the Christians and Mussulmen waged a violent war against each other, he flung himself, undismayed, into the camp of the Saracens; and when led before the chief barbarian who commanded them, he said, "Prince, I am sent to you, not by men, but by the Most High God, to show you the way of salvation, by preaching the Gospel to you." Filled with the spirit and power of Elias, he added, "If you desire to know the truth, call hither your priests light a great fire—let them go into that fire along with me, and the flames will prove to you whether their religion or mine is true." The astonished Sultan dared not accept this challenge. Overawed by such strange language, by such a courageous proposal, and by a certain air of superhuman majesty, which appeared in the person of his prisoner, he doubted whether he ought not to regard him as an angel concealed in a mortal form; he offered him splendid presents, which the man of God refused with simplicity. During many days he loaded him with proofs of affection and respect; and sent him away at length, with honour, to the camp of the Christians, after having recommended himself to his prayers,

as a Christian would have done. Thus it is, O Supreme Master of the universe, that Thou honourest those who serve Thee; at their voice, Thou dost restrain the ferocity of their enemies and of Thy own; Thou humblest before them the pride of those who lead armies to battle; and Thou dost make their very humility majestic and imposing to barbarous and unbelieving monarchs.

But you may hear something more wonderful than all this. Francis neglected no effort to conceal the perfection of his virtues, the favour which he received from Heaven, the austerities which he practised in secret, from the knowledge of his most perfect disciples; and the Lord multiplied miracles, in order to manifest all that the humble saint endeavoured to conceal. He often raised him in the air, in presence of many witnesses, and held him for a long time suspended before their eyes, between heaven and earth, as if to give a sensible mark of the elevation of his soul above all the things of this world. At other times he showed him encircled by a heavenly light, and emitting rays whose lustre could not be endured. But there was a still more surprising miracle—a miracle which would be incredible, were it not confirmed by the most certain proofs, and if the Church had not expressly established a festival to consecrate its memory. God, wishing to make the intimate union between His servant and His crucified Son, visible to a certain extent, and wishing that the very flesh of that servant should announce the austerity of his penance and the sanctity of his life, despite all his efforts to conceal them, engraved upon it the sacred and ineffable stigmata, which are the especial glory of St. Francis. His hands and feet were pierced by the ministry of an Angel, by nails, which remained in them ever since, and which have been seen in them many years after his death; his side was opened, as if by a lance, and blood never ceased to flow from that wound which never after closed. Thus, even while he lived, this great saint was sensibly marked by the seal of the elect; and without awaiting the day of the resurrection and triumph of the predestined, his body was transformed, even here below, into a glorious likeness of the body of Jesus Christ. He bore upon this earth the same wounds as that adorable Saviour bears in heaven, in presence of His Father: his venerable body also remained incorruptible in the grave; and although the saint, whose humiliation ever bore a proportionate increase with his titles to glory, had requested, when dying, that his remains should be cast into the place where criminals were buried, these sacred relics, on the contrary, received unexampled

honours; they were venerated by kings, princes, pontiffs, and people; they were borne with solemnity and religious respect, first to the city of Assysium, his native place, as if to offer a solemn reparation for the insults they received there; and they were afterwards placed in a stately temple erected in his honour, where many miracles attested the approval with which Heaven confirmed the veneration which had been shown him upon earth.

After this, who would not exclaim, "O Lord! Thy friends are honoured and glorified beyond measure, even in this world, which is the place of their trial, and not of their triumph!" *Nimis honorificati sunt amici tui Deus.** Who would not declare that the ambition of proud men is both mean and senseless, as it turns their hearts away from Thee, who art the only source of all greatness: and as there is no wisdom nor true elevation of feeling but amongst the humble, who seek Thy grace, and who alone obtain it. *Superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.*† For your parts, my sisters, remain more attached than ever to the sacred and salutary humiliation of your state; entertain no other desire more strongly than to be more unknown and despised by the world than you are at present. St. Francis is great in heaven and on earth to-day, only because, of all men, he was most desirous of humiliation and contempt.

III.—I will not here enter into the detail of our saint's austerities, as it would be endless. It is enough to say, that since the beginning of his penitential career, he invariably studied to mortify nature in every respect. His fasts were continual, his abstinence astonishing, his labours and vigils incredible, and his severity to himself unlimited; he chastised his body like the great Apostle, and brought it into subjection;‡ and after the manner of our Saviour's cruel flagellation, he tore and mangled his flesh without mercy; he never slept but on the bare ground. With food, that was in itself insipid and forbidding, he mingled ashes, to make it more unpalatable. It was an ordinary practice of his to refuse himself even a drop of water, in the heat of summer, when he was consumed by thirst. In a word, his whole life was a punishment and a prolonged martyrdom. In the eyes of the world this may seem excessive misery; but it constitutes the happiness of the saints. What I am now about to advance, may, perhaps, be unintelligible to many Christians; but you, my sisters, who know the

* *Ps.* cxxxviii. 17. † *James* iv. 6. ‡ 1 *Cor.* ix. 27.

mysterious joys of penance, must easily comprehend me. If any one ask me, what advantages Francis derived from such austere mortification, I would answer, unhesitatingly, that all advantages came to him with that virtue itself.

First—It was by means of it he acquired such an absolute control over all his senses; it was by it he released himself from the sad slavery in which we live, under the tyranny of our passions, our appetites, our repugnances, our inclinations, our humour, and caprice; it was by means of it he restored to the spirit all its authority over the flesh, and revived the order which God had established from the beginning, but which sin subverted: and in that order he found such peace as could never be obtained from our slothful indulgence to the sense, nor from all the gratifications which we concede to the waywardness of nature.

Secondly—It was by means of it Francis overcame concupiscence, and thus made reparation, as far as lay in his power, for the disorders occasioned by the revolt of our first parents, and became reinstated in all those privileges which they deserved to lose. As he yielded an entire submission of his whole being to God, in return for this, God made all creatures subject to him; he could command the elements and all nature with a voice of authority. Hence his power of miracles—the most astonishing emanation of a divine power. Francis forced water to spring from the rock, like Moses; he healed the sick by a word, like St. Peter; he restored the dead to life, like Eliseus; he tamed wild beasts, like Daniel; he changed water into wine, like our Lord Himself. Let the world, which is ever blind, reason as it may please respecting these extraordinary facts; its affected disbelief, and its sarcasms, will never weaken their certainty; but for our part, my sisters, we must confess that such a miraculous privilege was not too dearly purchased, by all the voluntary sufferings which Francis imposed upon himself. Alas! how important are the advantages of which we deprive ourselves by our sloth and remissness! We fear the slightest sacrifices; we indulge our own weakness in every performance; we have almost forgotten to impose a courageous mortification upon ourselves; and, therefore, our prayers are become powerless; we obtain nothing for our brethren nor for ourselves; and we are useless where the saints would have wrought wonders. The gospel assures us that if we had faith, like the grain of mustard-seed, we would remove mountains; what, then, may we not effect, if we were perfect souls, detached from all things, and dead to ourselves! We

would avert private and public calamities and plagues; we would avert the ruin which threatens this country; our prayers would bind the guilty, and extinguish the factions which are daily starting into existence; we would be, as it were, a visible providence upon earth, the common resource of our friends, our relatives, of the nation, and the Church herself. What, then, are all the privations, and all the trials which accompany the severest mortification, when contrasted with the inestimable blessings it procures?

Thirdly—it was by means of such mortification that Francis derived his wonderful enlightenment respecting the most exalted mysteries, and more particularly respecting the incarnation of the WORD, and the life and death of the Man-God. These momentous objects which were shown him, as they are shown to the blessed in glory, made such deep impressions upon his mind, that it always cost him an effort to think upon the concerns of this earth. He saw Jesus Christ in every place: sometimes born in Bethlehem, sometimes instructing the people, and abundantly distributing His graces and blessings amongst them, sometimes suffering and dying upon the cross for our sakes. This latter view, in particular, penetrated his soul with a feeling of affection and gratitude to the Divine Redeemer, such as no language could express. He went about, deploring that men could suffer their thoughts to dwell upon anything else, except the reflection that God had become a victim for their sakes. But after the fiery darts of an Angel had inflicted the wounds to which we have alluded, upon his heart and limbs—after he became crucified with his Divine Master in a perceptible manner—there were no limits to his love; and as God imparts His graces liberally to those who love Him, there were no limits, also, to the favours with which He crowned him. He visited him at all times; He appeared to him on his journeys, as He appeared to the disciples upon the road to Emmaus; He manifested Himself to him in sleep, as He did to Jacob; He was sometimes seated at his table, as He was seated at the table of Abraham. The humble Church of Portiuncula, where the holy man generally prayed, and his favourite retreat of Mount Alvernum, were like two paradises of delights, where, surrounded by Angels, holding converse with the Queen of Virgins, beholding Jesus Christ face to face, admitted to a union with all the adorable Trinity, lost in an ocean of light, he spent days and nights in raptures and delight, and already enjoyed a foretaste of the happiness of heaven. He sighed with ineffable ardour for the close of his exile; the fire

of divine love consumed him by degrees; his eyes became inexhaustible fountains of tears, and from continually shedding them, he lost his sight at last. At length, yielding to the vehemence of his desires—his strength being completely exhausted, in the forty-fifth year of his age—the hour of his dissolution arrived. When the long wished-for moment came, at which his soul was about to be released from its mortal prison, the dying Francis was laid upon the ground, and his disciples, in tears, were gathered around him. He consoled and encouraged them with these words, which you should listen to, my sisters, as if they were addressed to yourselves: "Farewell, my children: abide for ever in the fear of the Lord. Happy are they who persevere in the good which they have begun. For my part, I am going to my God with great alacrity; and I recommend you all to His grace." In the midst of their tears and lamentations, he repeated the hymn of his deliverance, exclaiming, "O Lord, release my soul from its prison, that it may bless Thy holy name in freedom." *Educ de custodia animam meam ad confitendum nomini tuo.** "The just who surround Thy throne await me, and are impatient to see me associated with their happiness." *Me expectant justi donec retribuas mihi.*† These were the last words he uttered upon earth; the next were heard by the inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem.

And this was the final advantage which he received from this mortification which seems so alarming in our eyes. He has entered into the joy of the Lord; he dwells in that land of light and peace; he possesses a perpetuity of every good; he beholds the sovereign and infinite beauty without a veil; he is bathed in the torrent of pure and ineffable delights; he drinks of the river of life; he is nourished by truth, satiated with happiness, and inebriated with love; and in the transports of a joy ever renewed, he signs the canticle of the seraphim, and the everlasting hymn of victory.

But how can I attempt to describe what eye hath not seen, what ear hath not heard, and what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive! No, my dear sisters: I shall only remind you that the happiness which your holy founder has attained by so many tribulations and sufferings is the same that is promised and prepared for your enjoyment. It is with the hope of reaching this glory that you have renounced the world, and endured so many painful trials to the present hour. Let this reflection sustain your spirits even to the end. You live

* *Ps.* cxli. 8. † *Ibid.*

at a season of sorrow and calamity for the Church; and you share in the afflictions of your mother. Besides the rigours which you have voluntarily embraced, there are others which are far more afflicting. You have not enjoyed the consolation of spending your days in that sacred dwelling, where your vows were pronounced and where your ashes should repose, nor of seeing yourselves surrounded by a numerous and sacred society, growing up around you as your children, for the glory of God, for the edification of the faithful, and for your own happiness. The days of fruitfulness and joy are gone; and the days of sadness and sterility have succeeded. It is the will of the Lord that you are now only a small and desolate flock, and wanderers without a fold. Nevertheless, *fear not little flock. Nolite timere pusillus grex.** The Divine Shepherd watches over you from the highest heavens; the God of St. Francis, who is your Father also, beholds your affliction; and He prepares His kingdom for you, as a recompense for all your trials. *Quia complacuit Patri vestro dare vobis regnum.*† After a few years of perseverance—perhaps a few moments—your trials will be at an end; and you will rejoin those who have gone before you, in that dwelling where the poor, the humble, and the crucified souls shall reign with Jesus Christ, their model and their head, in the midst of never-ending joy and glory, which is a blessing I wish you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

PANEGYRIC OF ST. VINCENT OF PAUL.

A CHARITY SERMON.

"God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed."—*Acts* x. 38.

A PREJUDICE has long prevailed through the world, that Christian piety is a kind of selfishness which concentrates man's feelings upon himself—a barrenness and insensibility of heart, which, under the pretext of loving God alone, separates man from his fellow creatures, and renders him indifferent to all that concerns them—a senseless enthusiasm, which, by removing him in thought to heaven, makes him a useless member of society on earth—and a willing but childish subjection, which, by confining him within the narrow circle of trifling obser-

* *Luke* xii. 32. † *Ibid.*

vances, checks the soul in its heavenward flights, and will not suffer it to ascend to concerns that are truly great and worthy of immortality. Divine Providence seems to have intended the utter refutation of an error, which is so injurious to religion, by raising up Vincent de Paul, and making an astonished world behold an humble priest, who, without birth, fortune, or title—with no science but the Gospel, no philosophy except charity itself, no resources but zeal, conceived and accomplished enterprises, for which the power and treasures of kings would have been insufficient—erected vast and innumerable monuments—established whole societies of the benefactors of mankind—more than once refreshed Europe, in its desolation, with his alms—who, like an inexhaustible spring, that never ceased to flow from the depths of fruitful poverty, became the reformer of the morals of the Christian world, the propagator of faith amongst unbelieving nations, the firm support of the Church, the oracle of the clergy, the counsellor of kings, the nursing father of whole nations—who provided for every want, relieved every misery, arrested the course of public disasters—who, in a word, was, if I may use the expression, the saviour of an entire generation, the wonder of his age, the admiration of posterity, the only one amongst all the saints from whom impiety itself could withhold the tribute of its veneration. It was well that a minister of Jesus Christ should afford such an example to the world, before the time when the followers of false wisdom were about to exhibit such a different spectacle, and that men should witness all that religion was able to effect for their happiness, before they should experience all that proud unbelief was able to effect for their misery. What an answer to so many calumnies and declamations against priests is furnished by the life of Vincent of Paul! What a refutation of so many satires and invectives against piety is contained in the narrative of his actions! It is that narrative I am about to lay before you, my brethren, quite certain of the impression it must make upon your hearts.

Who could refrain from being moved at the name of him who forms the subject of this panegyric? or who could be a stranger to the interest which it inspires? Oh, you who love the Church, contemplate the virtues in which she found her consolation and her glory. You, who are alive to the honour of your native land, applaud the mighty actions of a saint, who has been born amongst your fathers, and who, by becoming the universal benefactor of all mankind, made the name of your country ini-

versally respected. Compassionate souls, who sympathize with the miseries of your fellow-creatures, who grieve at your inability to wipe away every tear, learn by what secrets charity multiplies its resources, and works its miracles. Widows, orphans, aged, miserable of every class, bless the memory of him whose immortal solicitude continues to relieve you a hundred and fifty years after his death, and to support you by the hands of those generous daughters, whom he has given you for ever as servants and as mothers. Let us also, ministers of the altar as we are, be instructed and be confounded too, at the sight of that illustrious model of the priesthood. But, above all, you, worldlings, who have been seduced by false doctrines, cast aside your unfounded prejudices this day; judge from facts, and tell me is not this perfect disciple of the Gospel, in like manner, the most perfect benefactor of all mankind.

All the services that can be rendered to man may be reduced to these two—to make them better and happier. But has any one ever more effectually attained that two-fold object than Vincent of Paul? Has any one ever struggled with more devotedness and with more success against man's two greatest plagues—against guilt and misery? Whole volumes would be scarce sufficient for even an abridged account of his immense services; but to convey some notion of them, we shall endeavour to submit to your consideration, in the first place, what he has done to make men better, by the efficacious reformation of their morals; and, secondly, what he has done to make them happier, by the relief of public and individual calamities. You must recognise in him a worthy representative of a God of mercy, and, as it were, an angel from heaven, whose sole occupation on earth was to purify it from the disorders which defile it, and to deliver it from the miseries which afflict it. *Pertransiit benefaciendo et sanando omne oppressos.*

But, what have I undertaken, oh, my God? Who am I, that I could delineate such exalted virtues, and describe so many miracles? where can I find that simple and modest language, which is alone adapted to the panegyric of the most humble of men, and the man farthest removed beyond all vain display? But, again, where can I find that elevated and sublime language which is alone proportioned to the incomparable greatness of his works? Must I not disfigure the portrait of this hero of charity, in endeavouring to delineate it, unless the same spirit which animated him may be communicated to me—unless Thou comest, O Divine Spirit! to

enlighten me with Thy living light, and to inflame me with a fire different from that of too feeble human eloquence. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—About half a century after the spirit of discord and rebellion, of error and schism, had begun to agitate Europe, and tear the Church asunder—after daring innovators had shaken the foundations of faith, and broken off the restraints of authority and discipline, by their audacious revolt against the Church—disturbance, confusion, and unrestrained licentiousness, bore universal sway; princes were not better obeyed than pastors; divine and human laws were alike disregarded; and each individual, fashioning for himself a faith according to his caprice, also formed for himself a morality in accordance with his passions. France, then a victim to all the crimes engendered by civil and religious warfare, was the wretched theatre of sad and sanguinary scenes. Provinces there were armed against provinces, cities against cities, subjects against their monarch, and the people against the nobility; division reigned in the court, amongst the clergy, in the camps, amongst the magistracy, and even in the bosom of families; plunder, conflagration, murders, and awful massacres, marked the successive triumphs and revenge of opposite factions; each successive day saw altars overturned, temples reduced to ashes, the celebration of the divine mysteries disturbed by the din and tumult of arms; the blood of the Adorable Victim spilled upon the pavement of the sanctuary, and mingled with the blood of the faithful, slaughtered in the holy place. Many of the sacred ministers perished by the sword; others sought safety in flight; others, in the midst of such alarms neglected their painful and perilous duties; the pulpits were silent, the churches abandoned, the sheep scattered and wandering about; ignorance extended its dark shadow; impunity multiplied guilt, guilt grew unabashed; and the wounds of morality seemed desperate, even as in our own days.

Such was the situation of this kingdom, and of most Christian lands when Vincent of Paul, the son of a poor peasant, was born in an obscure village of the diocese of Dax, at the foot of the Pyrenees, towards the close of the sixteenth century. Oh; happy roof of the cottage beneath which was born the precious child who was destined to repair so many calamities, and to make religion, and all the virtues which follow in its train, bloom once more in so many lands. Destined for great things, like David, our saint, like him, had no other occupation in his youth but to tend his father's flocks; but, like

David, even at this early age, and in the midst of his humble labours, he is favoured with Heaven's most abundant blessings. The sight of the fields where he spends whole days, far from all human intercourse, elevates his thoughts to the great Creator; he feels the desert converted into a temple; prayer occupies his mind incessantly; and in the glimmering dawn of life, when other men are still incapable of reflection, this youthful herdsman becomes familiar with heavenly contemplation. His singular piety, the stainless purity of his morals, the solidity and penetration of his intellect, the ingenuousness of his disposition, his sympathy for the poor, which led him to share with them what was scarce sufficient for his own wants, an ardent love for the house of the Lord, and a precocious zeal for His glory, disclosed the secret designs of Providence in his regard, and revealed, even beneath the rags of the shepherd, the future pastor of the Church. Being admitted amongst the number of clerics, he learned the elements of sacred science, and was afterwards sent to the capital of Languedoc, to pursue a complete course of ecclesiastical study there, under skilful masters. My brethren, I should congratulate that city, which has formerly been celebrated under more than one respect, for having been, at this time, the school which formed more than one saint; it had the honour of reckoning, almost at the same time, amongst his pupils, Vincent of Paul and Francis Regis, two apostolic men, whose memory shall never perish—over whose names I love to linger, for a moment, at the opening of their career—one of whom will be, in mature years, the founder and the head of a numerous and flourishing society of evangelical labourers; and the other, from his earliest youth, must become one of the worthiest members of a society already famous for the mighty victories which it won for the Gospel. One of them, setting no limits to his noble ambition of gaining souls to Jesus Christ, will never cease to traverse the whole of France, with his co-operators, and will send them to carry the light of faith to the farthest limits of the earth; the other always labouring alone, and obliged to confine the enterprises of his zeal within narrow limits, will be content with the title of the Apostle of Cevennes, and will face every danger, and suffer all kinds of sufferings and privations, to rescue the wild inhabitants of these mountains from the snare of heresy. One will reach an extreme old age, supporting, even to the end, the weight of his immense fatigue, and will die in peace, in the midst of his priests who love him, and of the poor, to whom he has been a father, with every mark of reverence from

the court and the city; the other, climbing the snow-capped summits of mountains in the depth of winter, and creeping along the brinks of precipices, in search of the wandering sheep, will sink, in the vigour of age, beneath incredible fatigue, and will die upon straw, in a wretched hut, to all appearance forsaken by the world at large. Illustrious rivals! admirable saints! they were equal in charity, humility, and devotedness; they were both consumed, for the salvation of their brethren, one by a slower sacrifice, and the other by a speedier death; they are both the glory of the Church, their mother, of France, their native land, and of the city which was, in some degree, their cradle; but Vincent excelled in the extent of his services, the magnificence and variety of his works, and the immortal relics which he has left behind him.

To return to his life. When elevated to the priesthood, he had already attained a high perfection in science and virtue; and, like another Moses, he burned with the desire of saving his people, and of flying to the assistance of so many souls who were perishing. But, before entering upon his glorious apostleship, he must first learn to suffer for the name of Jesus Christ; he must be able to speak, like St. Paul, of the dangers which he encountered on sea, the insults and violence which he endured—his wounds, his chains, and his captivity. Behold that frail bark in which he confides himself to the waves! scarce has she left the harbour, when African pirates seize upon her as their prey; the holy priest is wounded, and his blood flows. He is soon led in irons amongst the cruel enemies of the Christian name, and sold as a slave in barbarous Tunis. An impious renegade purchases Vincent of Paul, condemns him to the most slavish and ignominious labours, and oppresses him with the most rigorous treatment; but the heroic patience of this servant of God, his unalterable meekness, and something angelic which appeared in all his features, the ardent sighs which he heaved to heaven, the pious and affecting tone in which he sings the praises of the Lord, and repeats, in his sorrowful exile, the hymn of the children of Israel when exiled on the rivers of Babylon, moved at length the heart of this merciless tyrant; remorse seizes the apostate's soul: he deplores his baptismal vows violated, the religion of the true God betrayed, a Christian head defiled by the turban. In a word, the master becomes the conquest of his slave. Vincent of Paul, a happy conqueror, an undaunted fugitive, now becoming the guide and liberator of the man who had so cruelly oppressed him, encourages him to embark with himself in a frail skiff, and fly that accursed

land; he thus leads captivity captive, and goes even to Rome, to bring back to the holy Church a renegade now restored to its bosom for evermore.

This was the first victory of our apostle; but how can we follow him in his subsequent career? How is it possible to relate all his achievements? What remains for us but to select the most amazing miracles from amongst so many, and to omit, in the panegyric of such an extraordinary man, a number of memorable events, any one of which would be sufficient for the glory of anyone else besides himself alone? But, howsoever the abundance of facts may crowd upon us, there is one which we cannot pass by in silence, because it presents a most useful lesson, and one that shall have most important consequences, as we must shortly perceive. Hear it, directors of consciences, and you, Christians, who frequent, but perhaps without sufficient preparation or salutary fear, those sacraments which, though leading to salvation, are most ruinous when they are profaned or perverted.

A few years after his return to France, Vincent, having already acquired a celebrity by the multitude of conversions wrought through his ministration, and by his unwearied zeal in preaching the Gospel to both rich and poor, was called upon to attend a farmer on the point of death, who had always enjoyed a high reputation for piety. He hastened to attend him; but the holy man, enlightened by the Spirit of God, soon perceived that this unfortunate man had never made a perfect confession—that yielding to a weakness which is but too common, he always disguised his most humiliating faults, and that he was just about to lay the sacrileges of a whole life at the feet of the Supreme Judge. The heart of Vincent was moved to pity: he shuddered at the thought of such grievous danger. His prayers and tears arrested the hand of death which was ready to strike him, and obtained for the guilty man the grace of making amends, at length, for so many profanations, by an humble and sincere confession, which he readily makes to the charitable minister, after which he yields up his last sigh, blessing the mercies of the Lord, and openly proclaiming his past guilt, and his present happiness.

This example made so deep an impression upon the heart of the man of God, that, like another John the Baptist, his only care thenceforth was to preach the baptism of penance everywhere. Associating with himself some zealous priests, he traverses the villages and country places, exhorting sinners to appease the Divine Justice, to sound the depths of their con-

sciences, to review the years of guilt in the bitterness of their souls, and to discover their most secret wounds to the physician who might heal them. Oh! how efficacious are the words of a saint. Wherever his voice was heard, the hearts of all were moved; the air resounded with their groans and lamentations; tears of repentance flowed profusely: crowds threw themselves at his feet, striking their breasts, and confessing all their iniquities. Everywhere were seen remarkable conversions, enmities extinguished, acts of injustice repaired, the erring led back to their duties, heretics reconciled to the Church, order succeeding anarchy, piety restoring the dominion of peace and reinstating human nature in all its privileges, and every virtue resuming the place of every excess and of every crime. Such is the origin of these famous missions, to which France is indebted for its regeneration. From Picardy and Bresse, where they began, they extended rapidly, and with incredible fruit, through all the other provinces, so that at length the holy man, concentrating his operations, founded in Paris his congregation of "Priests of the Mission"—a society most precious to religion, which, favoured by the approbation of the Holy See, soon erected its institutions in every part of the kingdom, as well as in foreign countries—a vast body, whose operations he set in motion during his life, which he continued to animate by his spirit after death, by whose assistance he multiplied himself, and exerted the influence of his benevolent spirit in a hundred places together, and imparted a new direction and a decisive impulse to the age in which he lived. Every thing gives way before it; every thing is hurried on by it; nothing can resist it. Not only the hamlets and small towns, but the greatest cities, St. Germain, and the court itself resounded with the simple and urgent exhortations, the familiar and pathetic instructions of Vincent and his associates. The young king and the queen regent, the princes and courtiers, suspend business and pleasure, in order to hear them. The emulation in improvement becomes universal, the return to piety unanimous, and the ardour for good works alike in every gradation of society. Armies become no less docile than civilians to the voice of these new apostles, who dwell beneath the tents of the soldier, following marches and encampments, and like the Levites of old, bearing the holy ark in the midst of the valiant of Israel. On the eve of battle, warriors are seen crowding anxiously around them, nobly grieving at the recollection of their faults, and at the thought of the judgment of God, bending the knee to receive forgiveness from Heaven, and then amazing

by a courage more than human. Not only is licentiousness banished from the camp, but repentance and virtue penetrate with these angels of peace even to the prisons and the darkest dungeons, and climb the gallies in their train. These abodes of horror became the most glorious theatres of their zeal; hearts locked up against all entrance to humanity, are opened to religion; savage monsters are transformed into lambs; galley-slaves become penitents. It would seem that the devil has been banished from his especial empire, where, instead of blasphemies and shouts of rage, pious hymns and words of benediction alone are heard. Every age and sex, every class and condition, become sharers in the benefit of these efficacious preachings, which men, unwearied by their labours, multiply from one extremity of the kingdom to the other with unwearied activity. The appearance of France is changed. Habits are rendered more subdued and refined; passions are calmed down; the rancour of religious bitterness appeased; factions and parties gradually extinguished; and these humble missionaries, under the guidance of Vincent of Paul, provide for their native land, after all its calamities and dissensions, the peaceful and glorious reign of Louis XIV.—the brightest ornament of our country's history.

Tell me now, if you dare, that religion and its ministers are useless to society—that they should be regarded rather as an incumbrance than a support to the state. Happy, thrice happy is the nation to which God, in His mercy, is pleased to send good priests! They will be the regenerators of public morality, the models of every virtue, the instruments of every good, and, as it were, the life-giving leaven which will sanctify the whole mass of a people. What other ambassadors, except those who are sent from Heaven, could pacify this earth, heal festering hearts, extinguish hatred, restore conscience to the infidel, and integrity to the unjust, and cause the torrent of guilt and passion which had overflowed its banks to run once more in its proper channel? And thus, when the Lord, in His indignation, wishes to visit a corrupt generation with His heaviest vengeance, He takes away its priests, or gives it such as resemble itself—who are the accomplices, or the careless observers of its guilt. Then, no other resource is left, but to weep in despair over miseries which are past recovery.

Never was there one more deeply impressed with this truth than our saint; and therefore he felt it to be of comparatively trivial importance to revive the faith of the people, unless he revived the spirit of their divine vocation in the priestly order.

But what difficulties impeded the fulfilment of this design, in the midst of the disorders occasioned by the civil wars, and the thick darkness spread around by heresy, and the fatal blows directed against ecclesiastical discipline on every side! It must be confessed that the wounds of the sanctuary were then deep indeed; nevertheless, he undertook to heal them; and it is memorable, that whilst the reformation of the clergy of Italy was enough to immortalize St. Charles Borromeo, a prince of the Roman Church, and the nephew of a distinguished pope, St. Vincent of Paul, a simple priest, and the son of a poor labourer, reformed the clergy of France, and those of other countries; and even this was not his greatest work; it was only one of his claims to the admiration and gratitude of mankind. The education of the clergy had been so neglected up to his time, that there were not throughout the kingdom any of those houses where they may be assembled beneath the eyes of experienced guides, to be formed by judicious rule, and trained to the holiest of all states. It was he who gave us seminaries—those schools of sacred science which we now regard as the chief hope of religion, and the only means of perpetuating the priesthood with advantage. He also established for young candidates for the sacrament of holy orders, pious retreats, in which he prepared them, by a course of fervent exercises, to receive the plenitude of the Spirit of God along with the imposition of hands; and the wisdom of these exercises struck the chief pastors and supreme pontiffs so vividly, that they adopted them, and required their observance from all who prepared to enter the ranks of the sacred soldiery. To these he subsequently added these pious conferences, whose renown proclaimed their success and advantage throughout Europe. Week after week there were seen crowding to these religious assemblies young ecclesiastics along with men who had grown grey in the ministry,—venerable pastors, illustrious prelates, the brightest intellects, and the most shining lights of the Church of France. The great Bossuet, who was one of the number, declared in his old age, when writing to Pope Clement XI., that when they heard Vincent of Paul in their assemblies, treating upon the duties and virtues of the Christian priesthood, they all felt as if God Himself was speaking through his lips. "*Tunc impleri sentiebamus apostolicum illud. Si quis loquitur tanquam sermones Dei.*" Here they imbibed an ardent zeal for the house of the Lord, a love of holy doctrine, an attachment to the maxims and observances of the Church, a sincere piety, and an entire devotedness to the labours and fatigues of the pastoral office; here they were

filled with the spirit of Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine, or rather with that of the Apostles themselves, of whom Vincent was the living image and the worthy interpreter. In these meetings, the eloquence of the pulpit was refined and purified: preachers learned to discard frivolous ornaments for solid beauties, to despise the art of rhetoricians, in order to apply themselves to the simplicity of the Gospel; and preaching assumed that august form, that grave, affecting, and persuasive character, which was soon afterwards admired in the immortal discourses of Bossuet, Fenelon, Massillon, and Bourdaloue. The holy man thus became, as it were, the father of a new generation of fervent and accomplished priests, who spread in all directions, to enkindle that fire which Jesus Christ had come to cast on earth. There issued from his school a multitude of sacred orators, directors of consciences, pastors of parishes, learned men, doctors, and even bishops, all of whom renewed the episcopal order and the whole body of the clergy. None were elevated to the dignities of the sanctuary except those who were fashioned by his hands; and when he was subsequently called, by the enlightened confidence of the queen regent, to her council of conscience, and commissioned to watch over the interests of religion and the proper distribution of ecclesiastical employment throughout the kingdom, his integrity, his wisdom, and his firmness, served to complete the work he had begun, by depriving avarice and ambition of all hope of success, by rescuing real merit from the obscurity which it sought, to place it on the candlestick of the Church, and filling up the sees and benefices by such judicious selections that, according to the testimony of one of the most illustrious bishops of the succeeding age, the clergy of France was indebted to him for all the splendour with which it shone in the brightest age of its glory. "*Clero Gallicano*," says Flechier, writing to Pope Clement XV., "*cum quo nunc etiam præfulget splendorem contulit.*"

Oh, Church of France, so beautiful and holy! so fertile in great virtues and great talents!—who can deplore thy calamities as bitterly as they deserve? Where is thy glory now? Thou who didst shed such lustre over all the nation, and didst render it so many signal services—who didst furnish our kings with its best ministers and the firmest support of their thrones, and France with its best writers, with its most famous orators, with so many great and learned men in every department—who didst civilize its people whilst they were yet barbarians, and cleared its still uncultivated soil, and covered with such splendid

monuments this land which was so long a bright and happy one —who wert so lavish of thy treasures for the relief of the poor —who didst educate infancy, instruct youth and mature years, and console old age in its anguish and misfortune—who didst make morality respected, which is more precious than laws, and didst preserve the deposit of faith, that ancient and precious inheritance of a most Christian people—how hast thou merited the hatred of thy own children by the very favours which thou didst bestow? Why have they plundered and pursued thee with fire and sword, and overturned thee in the dust, and almost drowned thee in thy own blood? And now, when alas! thou canst scarcely breathe, and thou art the mere shadow of thy former self, why is not their rage disarmed, and why do they so furiously assail thy poor remains, as if thy total extinction could alone appease their fury? Oh, how severely will a more just posterity hereafter condemn such injustice and ingratitude! Struck with the awful chasm which thy death will leave in the national glory, and the institutions and resources of their native land, they will bitterly deplore the blind fanaticism of those who shuddered not to destroy thee, But what do I say? No. God forbid that they should be allowed to accomplish their fatal design! Oh, mayest thou come forth from the ordeal unscathed! Mayest thou revive and be once more flourishing, not to excite the envy, but to earn the esteem of the world at large—once more powerful, not to gratify revenge, as nothing is farther from thy wishes, but to distribute new favours according to thy desire —once more adorned with learning and virtue, that thy enemies may be compelled to love thee, and perish themselves, by their own regret! for the miseries which they wished to inflict upon thee. O, great God! raise up amongst us another Vincent of Paul, who may once more pluck the thorns from Thy field, and produce an abundant harvest of pastors and ministers according to Thy own heart.

My brethren, I will not fill up the outline which I should present in this view of my subject: I will not point out ecclesiastical reform, extending under the care of this holy man, through Italy, Savoy, and Spain; I will not enumerate the miracles which have been wrought by his missions in the Catholic countries of Europe, in those where heresy prevailed, and even among the pagan people of Africa, where some of his priests suffered a glorious martyrdom; I will not allude to the fury of duels, which he suppressed, nor to the licentiousness of the theatre, which he confined within narrower limits, nor

to the dangerous innovations in doctrine which he defeated, nor to the authority of the Holy See, which he asserted in opposition to its adversaries, nor to a hundred other effects of a zeal from which nothing could escape, and which no obstacle could obstruct; and finally, I will not represent the author of so many favours, effecting more by his example than by his exertions, triumphing over guilt and error more by the charm of his meekness, and the influence of his virtues, than by any other means whatsoever—a worthy friend of Francis de Sales, with whom he concurred in the opinion, that the heart is most effectually changed, by winning it over by love, and the mind enlightened, by causing the mild light of persuasion to shine upon it.

You see, then, what Vincent of Paul has done to make men better, by the efficacious reformation of their morals; but you must also see what he has done, to make them happier, by the no less efficacious relief of their miseries.

II.– In proposing to relate the works of mercy performed by Vincent of Paul, I feel myself as it were, embarked upon a fathomless and boundless ocean; I can only unfurl my sails, and entreat the Lord that he may be pleased to shape my course, and sustain my strength and spirits, whilst I strive to traverse that abyss of wonder.

Are these the liberalities of a simple priest, or the effects of royal magnificence, which I am now about to describe? Is it Providence itself I am about to show you, coming down upon earth, and concealed in mortal form, as if to take a nearer view of the wants of poor creatures, to relieve their miseries, and to amaze them by the sudden development of all its resources, and the unexpected distribution of all its riches? There is no image too great, no figure too bold, to prepare you for the magnificent spectacle which I am about to exhibit.

Vincent had a heart that deeply sympathised with human misery; he possessed the mind of benevolence, and, as it were, the divine instinct of charity. In two parishes, of which he had successively been the pastor, he had established useful associations, which were destined to relieve the sick, to support the poor, and to assist all the distressed. Heaven showered down such manifest blessings upon these first efforts of his zeal, that the principal cities of France solicited him for similar institutions; and almost every country-town and village had one formed and directed by this holy priest. He thus went about, extending his blessings in every place; and wherever he passed, misery and sorrow seemed to vanish at his approach.

His efforts had so succeeded, that he began to be regarded as the universal head of every charitable enterprise, and, as it were, the accredited agent of God's mercies amongst mankind, when Providence placed under his direction a widow, rich in the gifts of fortune, but regarding them only to share them with the needy—born in the highest ranks of society, but more humble by her sentiments than distinguished by her birth—of a brilliant and cultivated mind, but desiring no other science except to know Christ crucified—infirm in body, but endowed with a strength of soul to which everything was easy, and which was ever ready to forget its own sufferings in order to fly to the relief of the miserable—often oppressed with sadness and interior trials (for so the Lord allowed), but finding consolation and joy in wiping away the tears of the afflicted. You anticipate me; for it is to Louisa de Marillac, so well known by the name of Madame Legras, that I refer. What assistance will this generous lady afford her director? She visits the many benevolent institutions which he had formed through ten dioceses; her prudence endues them with animation and strength; she increases their means by her industry and liberality; she inflames the coldest hearts by the fire which burns in her own; and it is plain that she is animated by the same spirit as Vincent of Paul himself.

What wonders are not these two great souls, when thus united, able to undertake and accomplish? And how great are the institutions which they shall bring to maturity, my dear friends. Oh! let all human nature rejoice. Heaven is about to bestow Sisters of Charity upon this earth. This society, whose name and works are a sufficient commendation, but which men will never commend as much as it deserves, must have a small and feeble beginning, like all the other mighty operations of God. The illustrious widow, wishing to multiply herself, to a certain extent, for the service of the poor, first receives into her house a small number of select associates, with whom she shares her table, her exercises, her labours, and whom she forms, under the direction of our saint, to the laborious functions of the interesting ministry to which she devoted herself. She teaches them—oh! hear this, my brethren—she teaches them the exercise of these tender cares which alleviate the anguish and sorrow of the sick, the delightful insinuations which console and instruct the dying, the attentive solicitude which tries to discover their wants, the earnestness which anticipates their wishes, the zeal which slights all that is revolting to the feelings, the patience which is not abated

by ingratitude or unjust complaints; she teaches them the useful art of preparing salutary remedies with her own hands, and of applying them with discrimination—to dress wounds, to heal infirmities, to lisp with childhood, in order to impart to it lessons proportioned to its weakness, to inspire the poor man with virtue, whilst his misery is relieved, and thus to administer a two-fold alms, to the body and to the soul; and thus she forms a new school, where charity itself provides mothers for orphanhood, teachers for abandoned infancy, physicians for the sick who were destitute of aid, dispensers of relief for the needy, and consolers for every species of affliction and misery. Her first pupils corresponded with the care of their pious mistress, and fulfilled her most sanguine expectations; others followed their example; young ladies of the most distinguished rank increased the number; and, finally, zealous virgins crowded around the benevolent widow, soliciting the honour of being admitted amongst her children. Her residence soon became insufficient to contain their number; it became necessary to enlarge it; and, soon after, a still larger establishment had to be sought. The institutions of Vincent of Paul were blessed with a special fruitfulness. Increase, then, oh! family blessed by Heaven and beloved by mankind—increase, to be the consolation of the world at large, the universal refuge of the distressed, the antidote for all the miseries which afflict poor human nature—increase, little flock, a day will arrive when you, too, shall be a great people—when thirty-four houses will be scarce sufficient to contain your numbers in the capital of France alone—when you shall be spread through more than three hundred establishments over all the surface of this kingdom—when you shall extend beyond its limits, even to Poland, which will never forget your services. And when, in after times, a frightful revolution will subvert the world—when triumphant impiety shall destroy all the holy institutions erected by religion—even in the hour of its triumph, it will regard with self-reproach the hour when it included you in the common proscription, as an interval of madness; it will hasten to request your help and your blessings once more; and whilst it calls you beside the miserable, who would have perished without your aid, it will declare, in the most authentic manner, that charity is alone necessary to the world, and that philosophical benevolence is only a sounding phrase and a splendid falsehood. Daughters of Vincent of Paul! behold your origin; see how the hand of God has multiplied your numbers in the first instance, and then preserved you amid the storms which

raged around. It is the self-same omnipotent hand that now guides your colonies beyond the ocean, and establishes them firmly in another hemisphere; it is the same hand has opened the gates of Geneva, through which your sisters have entered, where I have lately beheld them, with my own eyes, gloriously wearing, even in the city of Calvin, the venerable habit in which you are clothed, and, despite old prejudices, attracting there, as well as everywhere else, the reverence which is due to mortal angels.

It was with ineffable joy that Vincent witnessed the auspicious beginnings of an institution which he always especially cherished, and whose future services and glorious destinies the Spirit of God, even then, enabled him to perceive. But, rapid as its development and advance have been, they are, at first, insufficient to satisfy the impatience which he feels to console and alleviate every suffering. He is aware that the "Hotel Dieu" of Paris—that vast asylum, which is open to every human infirmity and misery—is more like a tomb than an hospital! that the unfortunate patients, destitute of food and succour, breathe a pestilential air there, which causes certain death; he cannot witness such calamities without looking about for means to alleviate them; he speaks, and at his voice—observe, my brethren, what a character of sublimity is impressed on all his undertakings—at his voice two hundred pious ladies, amongst whom was the wife of the Chancellor of France, and other persons of high rank, not even excepting princesses, and amongst others the Duchess of Mantone, who afterwards became Queen of Poland, assemble around him, ready to execute his wishes; and, by his directions, they become the servants of the enormous multitude of wretched beings who were crowded to excess in that abode of infection and horror. They hasten to fulfil their new duties. It is but too little to say of them, that they attend upon these living corses; that by rendering the most painful and revolting services, they at length succeed in causing a purer air to circulate amongst them; that by their mild and engaging intercourse, by the marks of a lively interest which they manifested, they animate the most desponding spirits, and alleviate the most dreadful sufferings. But they also purchase, at great expense, a house hard-by that dwelling-place of misery, and convert it into a magazine, for the reception of everything necessary to these abandoned outcasts; here they get ready two meals, every day, for a thousand invalids; and, with a grace no less acceptable than the gift, they distribute with their own hands

to the wretched objects of theirs olicitude, nutritious support adapted to the individual wants of each. That nutriment is received as if it were bread that had come down from heaven; the faltering strength of these patients revives once more; those who were expiring return to life; and hope and joy revisit every heart. How efficacious must you not suppose the religious exhortations to have been which these truly Christian ladies combined with such liberality and attention? Do you imagine that they felt it difficult to inculcate the praise of that Providence whose benevolence they so worthily represented? And can you feel surprised at hearing that, the very first year when they consecrated themselves, under the saint's direction, to this evangelical office, seven hundred and sixty Mussulmen and heretics, which the hospital contained, abjured their errors—to say nothing of a multitude of sinners who gave the most unequivocal marks of a sincere and solid conversion? Such, my brethren, are the "cruelties" which religion practices beside the bed of sickness.

These generous benefactresses may have abundant reason to believe that by so useful, but at the same time so expensive and laborious a work, they sufficiently fulfilled the obligation of assisting the suffering members of Jesus Christ; but they entered upon the career of charity under the guidance of one who will not be readily disposed to suffer them to hesitate or falter, after the step they have already taken. A deplorable effect of the distress of families, and the depravity of morals—an appalling abuse, which, alas! has since become of far more frequent occurrence, and was, even then, much too frequent—prevailed about the time to which we refer. A multitude of unfortunate children, the offspring of debauchery or distress, were abandoned at their birth by the authors of their existence. Unnatural, and more unfortunate than unnatural mothers, refused support to the fruit of their womb; and, deaf to their wailings, left them in places of public resort, exposed to the commiseration or barbarity of the passer by. I dare not describe the deaths to which it is certain that many of these tender victims have been consigned: I must spare representations which make nature shudder; but, exposed to nakedness and hunger, the majority of them perished almost immediately, without assistance, and many of them without baptism; and those who escaped from such a miserable destiny, were taken up, by order of the magistrates, and carried to a poor widow, who, with the assistance of two hired females, was entrusted with the task of supporting so many orphans, and who, from

want of the necessary means, could scarce expect to prolong their sorrowful life a little, to let them be consumed more slowly by weakness or by want. If some of these miserable children lived for a little time, contrary to expectation, they were offered for sale, and purchased at so low a rate, that you would shudder at hearing how they were valued, less than the meanest animals.

But such was not the value that Vincent of Paul set upon them. Behold him, with his zealous co-operators in the work of charity, visiting the wretched dwelling of the poor widow. Upon entering it, they all recoil with horror at the sight of that multitude of pale, wasted, dying children, who, by their screams, solicit the support which their mothers' breasts refused, and which a needy charity partially bestowed. But soon, moved by the most tender compassion, they adopt some of these miserable orphans, and afterwards a greater number. Afterwards, being more strongly urged by the prayers and exhortations of the holy priest, they embrace all those feeble and abandoned beings within the circle of their solicitude, and undertake to act as mothers to them. They gather them into a spacious dwelling, afford them abundant nourishment, and generously undertake the care of their education. Is this enough? are so many wretched victims saved? or is there no reason to tremble for their destiny? Alas! their numbers increase to such a degree—the expense, which already rose to forty thousand francs a year (an enormous amount in these days), increased more rapidly from day to day—so many other wants present themselves—so many calamities and disappointments come upon them by surprise—that the spirits of these new mothers sink beneath them: and they all, with one accord, hasten to Vincent of Paul, declaring, with tears, that their means are exhausted, and that they can no longer endure the burden of an enterprise which presses so heavily upon them. What did he do? Oh! my brethren, you cannot fail to admire the fortitude of that soul who remains unappalled by every obstacle, nor can you fail also to admire the eloquence of charity, and its irresistible effects. He convenes a general assembly of all those who have borne a share in this affecting work: he makes them take their place upon one side, and causes all these poor children whom they had rescued from death, and supported to that hour, to be placed on the opposite side, and pronounces these words, which I shall repeat in all their simplicity, and which must appear more beautiful in proportion as each one is capable of generous emotion:—

"Well, ladies," said he, "compassion and charity have made you adopt these little creatures as your children; you have become their mothers by grace, as their natural mothers have abandoned them. Consider now whether you, too, are willing to cast them off. Cease to be their mothers; and become their judges this day. Their life and death are in your hands. They will live, if you but continue to bestow a charitable care upon them; but if you abandon them, you know very well that they must die. I am about to receive your judgments and your votes. It is time to pronounce their sentence, and to learn whether you will still persist in having no mercy for them."

Does any one of you, my brethren, require to be told that the only answer to this discourse were sobs and tears, and a unanimous resolution to continue, at any price, what had been so meritoriously begun? Happy triumph! All the generations of unfortunate children who were exposed from that time to our days—a period of nearly two hundred years—and all those who shall come after them, were saved together upon that day. How many millions of victims were rescued at this moment from irreparable ruin by a single man? It was thus the establishment was supported, increased, and extended. In the city of Paris alone, the expenses of its maintenance amounted shortly after to more than fifty thousand crowns a year. The Queen Regent, and subsequently Louis XIV., her son, who were both tributaries to the charity of this man of God, contributed liberally to its support. Splendid and spacious edifices were erected to receive the crowds of orphans who had become, as it were, children of the state; and the superintendence of them was every where confided to the daughters of Vincent of Paul. Such was the origin of these foundling hospitals, which attract the eye in all cities—monuments which reflect more glory upon the memory of our saint than kings and conquerors could derive from the palaces of gold and marble to which they have proudly attached their names.

After the accomplishment of this great work, will his benevolent zeal enjoy repose? or will it suffer any limits to its operations? Like a river, whose waters swell as it advances in its course, and which, after having overturned every barrier, rises above its banks and deluges the country far and wide, the charity of Vincent of Paul can be confined within no limits; it overflows all restraints, and deluges the whole earth with its blessings.

Need I describe the plagues which were let loose upon

Lorraine, and the duchy of Bar? But are you not all aware of them? The armies of five different nations disputed the right to these unfortunate countries, and vied with each other in the work of desolation. Everything fell a prey to a soldiery, enraged and drunk with slaughter; every field was desolated by fire and sword; every house was pillaged, or reduced to ashes; every family consigned to ruin; every man wanted the necessaries of life—so that, perhaps, such an instance of desolation was never seen before. A frightful contagion was added to the horrors of pestilence and war; thousands of the sick, without relief or refuge, were laid or heaped together in the streets or upon the public roads; and, what is most dreadful, but nevertheless truly verified by history, men were devoured by their fellow-creatures.

The report of these terrible calamities spreads through Paris, and reaches the ears of Vincent. His heart is pierced by them; but what can he do, when all those who were associated with his generous designs had already exerted their utmost efforts, and declared that all their means were exhausted: when the whole of France, impoverished and oppressed after so many wars, by the burden of public expenses, fears to be afflicted with famine in its turn. What can he do; but do you forget that the prayer of the saints is omnipotent—that He whom they invoke, and who loves to hear their prayers, is the same who changes dust into gold in the heart of the earth, and produces the harvests in each successive season? What can he do? But do you not see that God, who has set him up, in a special manner, as the minister of His charity, and the distributor of His favours here below, has also given him an authority over the hearts of men, and, as it were, a right and claim to their fortunes; so that it is impossible to refuse whatever he requests, in his capacity as the procurator and steward of the poor—that, at his voice, those who have made the last sacrifices, will make others still—that, if this be insufficient, the wealthiest lords of the court will combine with charitable ladies, to open new sources for liberality—that the queen, when the emergency may require it, will sell the furniture of her palace, and bestow her most valuable diamonds—that the king and his ministers will pay the tributes which he shall impose—in a word, that everything is given to the man of God: and that he seems to have received supreme dominion over all the goods of this world? What can he do? But, observe that his congregations are already multiplied—that he commands almost innumerable multitudes of priests, brethren, sisters of charity,

all ready to sacrifice their lives for the poor, at the least signal, who will become, whenever he pleases, so many physicians, and nurses, and servants for every sufferer, who will hurry to the cities and country places where contagion rages, and there joyfully embrace death itself. What can he do. But, observe all his establishments suddenly transformed into workshops and immense storehouses, and becoming for these people what the granaries of Joseph were for Egypt; see him sacrificing himself, and all who are his, to the public necessities—employing retrenchment after retrenchment, until his communities lived upon coarse black bread—converting all that was destined for their support into alms, and, upon urgent occasions, not even reserving as much as would supply a meal for the present day, but leaving everything to that Providence which never failed him. What can he do, my brethren? He can do what no monarch could effect: to support the whole population of these desolate countries—to struggle against the combined plagues of war, pestilence, and famine, and to subdue them all—to provide, during twenty consecutive years, for all the wants of twenty-five cities, and ten times the number of towns and villages—to distribute, every day, at a distance of eighty leagues from his residence, provisions, and medicine, and clothes, to a naked, diseased, and famishing people—in a word, to hold the same place with respect to the inhabitants of two vast duchies, as providence does to the world at large. If you think that I exaggerate, read the authenticated proceedings and deliberations of the councils, sheriffs, and mayors of the cities of Metz, Nancy, Pont-a Mousson, and others, in which acts of solemn thanksgiving are decreed to him for having preserved the lives of millions.

It is here that our discourse, instead of faltering, ought to rush forward like a torrent—that it may, at least, rapidly hurry through what there is not time to relate at length. Thus, when calamities precisely similar to those which we have already described, burst shortly after upon the provinces of Picardy and Champagne, the same wonders were renewed there: Vincent supported forty cities, and two hundred towns and villages, without diminishing any of the aid which he sent to Lorraine and Barois, without interrupting any of his countless enterprises, but, on the contrary, always continuing to form new ones. About the same period, when many families, reduced to despair, and whole religious communities fled from these desolated territories, and sought an asylum in Paris—when these were also joined by a multitude of refugees from

various parts of Europe, and chiefly from England, whence they had been driven by the persecution of Cromwell—Vincent received them all, and made abundant provision for all their wants; and took care not only that none of them should want the necessaries of life, but that each should be treated in conformity with his rank, and with the distinctions to which he was entitled; and, therefore, when a neighbouring nation acted liberally towards the Frenchmen, whom the tempest that raged so fiercely here had thrown upon its coasts, it was but a repayment of the debt contracted two centuries before, with a French priest, by those other refugees whom the revolutions of Great Britain had banished from their native land.

At a more recent period, when Paris, in a state of siege, was reduced to the last extremity, Vincent daily distributed food amongst fifteen thousand poor; when the natural result of the same events occasioned a scarcity in the towns and country villages which borrowed this immense capital, the wagons of Vincent, laden with all sorts of provisions, went through the country at all hours of the day and night, diffusing plenty for ten leagues around. When a ruinous overflowing of the Seine almost covered the village of Geneviliers—when the inhabitants, confined within their own houses by the inundation, were exposed to the danger of dying from want—when no one else would venture to approach them with relief, so alarming was the deluge which surrounded them—Vincent and his missionaries courageously embarked in frail barks, to carry them provisions, and to afford them the consolations of religion, and thus preserved them from despair and death.

But, what if I added that his relief found its way even to Ireland and Scotland, for the Catholics who were persecuted for the faith; and to Mount Lebanon, for the Maronite Christians, who were oppressed by the Turks—that his priests hurried to Poland, to Genoa, to Tunis, to Algiers, to lavish their labours and to sacrifice their lives, wherever the plague and other scourges raged? What if I enumerated the hospitals which he founded for every age and every human infirmity—if I referred to the beautiful and interesting hospital in which he prepared such a peaceful and pleasant asylum for abandoned old age—if I described the magnificent edifice which he erected for sick galley slaves, which is one of the monuments of Marseilles—if I pointed him out towards the close of his days, most successfully solving the problem which has been so insoluble to every government, namely, the abolition of mendicity, and thus demonstrating that religion only

can effect what will ever be impossible to all human power, as the latter must employ that mercenary zeal which seeks only to enrich itself—whereas the former exerts that generous charity which seeks to divest itself of all things.

At the sight of all these immense favours, must it not appear that God had caused His universal solicitude to rest upon this extraordinary man; that He confided His own power to his keeping; that He placed all heaven's treasures in his hands, to make him the support of all the wretched, and the saviour of all who were ready to perish?

If there be anything more worthy of our admiration than all this, it is the profound humility with which he exercised that omnipotence which he had received for the benefit of mankind. That man who was the object of a veneration perhaps unparalleled—to whom acknowledgments of regard were daily sent from every part of the known world—that man, whom a great king had summoned to his death-bed, to sanctify his last moments—whom a pious queen entrusted with all the interests of religion throughout the kingdom—whom bishops consulted—who reformed monasteries, regenerated the clergy, and converted the people—who formed numerous establishments, with a wisdom admired by the world at large—who governed so many sacred societies, and bore the weight of the most important concerns—that man could never be brought to accept any dignity or title, even at the most urgent solicitations; or rather, he manifested an anxiety to enjoy one title alone—a title with which he desired to be invested by royal letters patent—that of almoner-general to the galleys in France—that is to say, the servant and minister of all the malefactors in the kingdom. And he fulfilled the duties implied by that title, to their utmost extent. He never ceased to visit these unfortunate galley-slaves, who had now become his dearest children; he was equally unceasing in exhorting them, in instructing them, in lavishing consolations and relief upon them; he used to embrace them tenderly, and performed the most humble services towards them. We are even assured that he once substituted himself in place of one of them, that he gave him the clothes he wore himself, and clothed himself in the rags which that man wore, and loaded himself with the chain, in order to save him—an amazing excess of charity, which some believe to be incredible; and which would actually be so, in the case of anyone else besides Vincent of Paul: but in his case there is nothing to surprise us in it.

At length this great man, full of years and merits, and

wasted by labour and austerity, dies in peace; looking up to that heaven which is open for his reception, and blessing his priests and daughters, as Isaac and Jacob blessed their posterity with their dying breath.

I will say but a word regarding his obsequies which were attended by a prince of the blood royal, by an apostolic nuncio, by a large number of prelates, lords and ladies of the highest rank: but their chief ornament consisted in the widows, the orphans, and the poor, who followed in crowds the mortal remains of him whom each lamented as a father.

I will not say a word respecting the miracles which were performed around his tomb, although they have been many and most remarkable; for the greatest miracle of all is his life itself.

But what a concert of praises ascends at the same moment from every part of France. Each one relates the favours which he has received—the miracles which he has witnessed; and a thousand acts of the sublimest virtue which were concealed during his lifetime, are all revealed by death. The king, the councils of cities, every one of the bishops, and the whole assembly of the clergy, address their petitions to the supreme pontiff, and unanimously request that the honours of public veneration should be decreed to this great servant of God. Italy, Spain, and the distant islands applaud that prayer, and unite their solicitations with those of France. Never have the words of the wise man been more effectually verified—that the whole Church will proclaim the merits of the compassionate man; and never has there been a saint more universally honoured than he whose chief glory consisted in alms giving. *Eleemosynas illius enarrabit omnis ecclesia sanctorum.**

My brethren, of all the honours that can be paid him, none so deeply affects his holy soul as the imitation of his works. You will honour him in a manner especially worthy of him—you, who, under his invocation, and under the auspices of a merciful providence, are about to form an association like one of those which he himself established, and which assisted him in the performance of so many amazing efforts. And you will honour him in a manner worthy of him—you, Christian ladies! who will follow the example of so many illustrious ladies who have gone before you, by visiting the poor in their gloomy abodes, the sick upon their beds of pain, the prisoners in their irons, the afflicted amid the melancholy pictures of

* *Eccl.* xxxi. 11.

their woe, and pour alms into their bosoms, or at least consolation into their souls. You will honour him in a manner worthy of him—you all, my brethren, who, in order to assist this pious society to effect its interesting object—to increase the wealth set apart for the indigent—deposit your offerings to-day in this treasury of mercy and charity. Perhaps, amongst those on whose behalf your assistance is solicited, there are some of whom I may say, what our saint formerly said of the poor foundling children—that their life and death are in your hands; that they will live, if you assist them; but, that they will perish if abandoned by your sympathy and compassion. The result of this appeal will soon prove how far the examples of our saint have touched your hearts; and God will reward you hereafter in proportion to the sacrifices which you shall have made for the relief of the suffering members of His beloved Son. *Amen.*

PANEGYRIC OF ST. NICHOLAS, ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA.

"The just shall be in everlasting remembrance."—*Psalm* cxi. 7.

THE solemnity which assembles us to-day within this temple, my brethren, is a sufficient proof of the truth of these words. He whose memory we now honour, is one of these just, who left this earth more than fifteen centuries ago and whose glory, after so many generations, still overshadows the east, the west, and the Catholic world at large, so that there is scarce a name more universally venerated throughout the Church, more celebrated amongst Christian people, or more frequently invoked by the confidence of the faithful. And how has your holy patron merited to live thus in the memory of mankind, and to receive the homage of the remotest posterity? Was it by famous exploits, by remarkable dignities, by extraordinary gifts of mind? He was neither a prince, nor a warrior, nor the counsellor of kings: and it has not been said that he shared the eloquence of Chrysostom, nor the learning of Augustine. He was a saint; and that is his only title. He was endowed with virtues which make men really just in the eyes of God; and this is the foundation, of that glorious immortality which, according to the divine promise, will extend far beyond all time, and become as illimitable as eternity itself. *In memoria æterna erit justus.*

What efforts have been tried in our days to falsify this

oracle of the Lord and to abolish for ever the honours which we offer to the saints! What an impious and inveterate war has been waged against their memory and their veneration! Have we not seen their statues broken, their venerable ashes trampled under foot, the altars where they reposed, and the temples which they adorned, overturned—their names, which the piety of our fathers had reverentially engraved upon our public monuments and the walls of our cities, insultingly effaced—and by an extravagant excess of insanity, which must seem almost incredible, the very names of the days of the year, of the months, and of the seasons changed—the whole order of time subverted, and the world, to some extent, flung back into its primitive chaos, in order that every vestige of all that had been the object of the veneration of ages may disappear in the universal ruin. But these efforts have been unavailing. The reign of impiety has passed away, like the flood of a desolating torrent, leaving an alarming mass of ruins as the only sign to tell where it flowed. But the religion of Jesus Christ, and the glory of God's elect have not been buried beneath these ruins; heaven has not been overcome by the madness of this earth; the demolished altars have been re-erected; piety has been reinstated in its privileges and possessions; our temples resound, as in ancient times, with the hymns of the immortal Sion; there we joyously celebrate the virtues and the favours of our holy protectors; the patron saint of this church receives our usual homage upon this sacred day; and the tribute which is due to him will be discharged, even by a feeble voice. It is thus, oh great God! that Thou dost exhibit Thy omnipotence, by confounding the audacious designs of Thy enemies, baffling their vain wisdom, and dispelling, with a breath, their proudest hopes, even at the moment which they vainly think to be the hour of triumph.

But to return to our subject, my brethren; let us consider the virtues of the holy bishop to whom this festival is consecrated, as well as the remote antiquity at which he lived can suffer us to know them. His life naturally suggests two periods, when he edified the world in the midst which he lived, whilst he was yet only one of the simple faithful; and when, after having been introduced into the sanctuary, he held its highest dignities with the applause of the whole Church. We may, therefore, consider St. Nicholas first, as affording a model worthy of imitation to Christian youth, by the innocence of his morals, his piety, and his tender compassion for the poor before he left the world; and, secondly, as the model

of priests and pastors, by the ardent charity and undaunted zeal for the faith which he manifested, after having been promoted to the priesthood and the episcopal dignity.

Oh holy pontiff! whom works which were glorious before the Lord, have made great in the kingdom of heaven, and whom a countless number of miracles have caused to be styled great upon earth! thou, whom I revere from the bottom of my heart, and whom I daily invoke, thou knowest that I have long ardently desired to offer thee this public homage of my gratitude and regard. Thou wert given me as a patron, at the moment of my regeneration by baptism; and I have often experienced the effects of such powerful protection. Obtain for this people, and for myself, upon this day, the grace of imitating what we commend; and for me, in particular, the grace of impressing upon the souls of my hearers a love and a regard for that perfect sanctity of which thy whole life furnishes such a moving example. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I.—When the self-styled reformers of the Christian religion banished from their system of worship the honours which the Church has paid to saints in every age, they aimed a deadly blow at all religion, and deprived themselves of one of the most efficacious means of sanctification which that religion affords. After having banished from their temples the images and the sacred relics of these heroes of our faith, upon the manifestly frivolous pretext, that to venerate them as the friends of God, was to adore them as Gods, they insensibly lost all recollection of those whose monuments they had banished far from their sight; they ceased to contemplate their virtues, and suffered the salutary emulation which the examples of these heavenly men must naturally excite, to be extinguished in their hearts. For our parts, faithful to the maxims and observances of the primitive Christians, who celebrated the divine mysteries over the ashes of the martyrs in the catacombs, who religiously preserved the chains of the confessors, and the pictures of the most illustrious servants of God, and made their praises the most ordinary subject of their discourses and hymns, we, too, shall solemnize the festivals of the saints—we shall sing forth their praises, and proclaim them from our pulpits; and by recalling the miracles of their lives, we shall be animated to follow courageously in their footsteps.

The saint whose memory we honour to-day, my brethren, and whom I shall exhibit in the first instance as the model of Christian youth, was born of an opulent and pious family, in that part of Asia to which St. Paul had borne the light of the Gospel

more than two centuries before. Like Samuel, he was the fruit of the prayers and faith of a mother long afflicted with sterility. The blessings of heaven accompanied him even from his mother's womb. The indications of his future sanctity, which appeared from his very birth, and the express revelations of which his biographers make mention, afforded a presage of his future eminence. Happier than many of the saints whom the Church reveres, this privileged child preserved the grace of baptism unimpaired, and never tarnished the purity of his primitive innocence, which made him more like an Angel than a mortal man. Exempt from the ordinary defects of early age, he not only did not manifest the least ill humour, capriciousness, levity, or intemperance; but he also astonished persons who were perfect in virtue, by an evenness of character, a mildness, a patience, and a docility unmoved by every trial. Strange to say, he carried temperance even to austerity at that tender age, when man, being as it were altogether under the control of the senses, is so imperiously subjugated by the appetites of nature. From his earliest days he rigorously observed the laws of abstinence and fasting—the ancient and venerable laws of the Church, which have existed from the apostolic age, but whose rigour has never been imposed on the weakness of childhood; even then, attentive to every duty, he manifested an indifference for amusement and play; he found a more agreeable relaxation and purer joys in prayer. The light of the Holy Spirit had long preceded the dawn of reason in this second John the Baptist; and the Lord attracted that innocent soul to Himself by the delights of His love, before it could be conscious of any other propensity. What a beautiful spectacle, to see a child, who had scarce reached the fifth year of his age, prostrate in the house of God, his countenance bathed with tender tears, holding converse in spirit with his Creator, and protracting, to an almost endless duration, the heavenly conversations, from which he came forth with a consolation and fervour ever renewed. He felt an additional pleasure in distributing trifling alms amongst the suffering members of Jesus Christ. He poured into the bosom of indigence every gift which he received from the liberality of his relatives; and thus served the noviciate of that incomparable benevolence which was one day destined to make him so famous throughout the world. Such was our saint, my dear friends, in his earliest years; and doubtless such was also the child of whom the Gospel speaks—the child whom our Saviour placed in the midst of His disciples and whom he proposed to them as the model of perfect virtue.

Can this world present an object more worthy of the regard and complacency of men and Angels, than a tender soul, in which the likeness of its Author shines forth in all its loveliness, which retains its baptismal purity undefiled, and filled with ingenuousness, grace, and beauty, grows up in the midst of benedictions, like a budding lily watered by the dews of heaven, whose beauty dazzles and delights the eyes of every beholder?

Oh, my brethren! who could reflect without indignation that, in the present age of thoughtlessness and impiety, a whole sect of self-styled sages have arisen, who have made it their chief glory to corrupt infancy, and to steal away the lovely and endearing ornaments of piety and modesty? An arrogant sophist has asserted—and a thousand other sophists have repeated—that there is no need to speak of God to such feeble minds; that they need not even be told that they have a soul; that early education should have the senses as its only object—that is to say, that a creature endowed with reason and immortality, adorned with a conscience, and called to merit happiness by the practice of virtue, ought to be brought up like the stupid animals which instinct guides, and which death will utterly destroy? And what has been the result of these atrocious maxims? You know, my brethren—and I shudder to remind you of it—that we have seen a depraved generation growing up in the midst of us, who acknowledge no law and no restraint, who without shame or remorse pursue the dictates of brutal passions developed before their time; we have seen premature crimes and precocious vices, and childhood more practised in guilt than mature years or the most corrupt old age. Oh, great God! can we, even with tears of blood, too earnestly deplore—can we, by any prodigies of zeal and wisdom, ever repair the ruin which has been inflicted upon the hearts of that growing and precious portion of society by an impure and sacrilegious philosophy? Who can now favour us with chaste, modest, obedient, religious children, who reverence the Lord, and respect the authors of their days? Oh! fathers and mothers, how deplorable is your lot, if these to whom you have given existence have received the first lessons of licentiousness and unbelief within your own houses—if their eyes have encountered seductive objects and lascivious pictures—if their ears were assailed by criminal and dangerous discourse—if their hands have fallen upon those detestable books, which are filled with all the poison of irreligion ond libertinism, in the venerated sanctuary of a parent's home, which ought to be the most secure

asylum of innocence, and the most sacred school of morality! What consolation or what gratitude can you ever expect from these unfortunate victims of your cruel carelessness, in whom you yourselves have crushed the opening bud of every generous feeling, and who have, as it were, imbibed the most dangerous and mortal poison at the mother's breast? Oh! how guilty are those masters and teachers of youth to whose care these tender nurslings—the hope of their families and of their country—have been confided, if they neglect to sow in these youthful hearts the sacred seeds of religion and faith, without which honour and integrity will only be unmeaning words, and morality an arbitrary and unavailing code! But, surely, private and public education must resume their real character under a paternal government; and the children of Catholic France will no longer be brought up like those of pagan and barbarous people. And you have already begun that auspicious regeneration of the habits of early age—useful and laborious teachers of the poor;* you who make that Christian doctrine, whose honourable name you bear, the basis of all your instructions—you who propose neither your own glory nor fortune, but the interest of church and state, as the object of your modest labours, and are noiselessly preparing for us a precious generation of spirited defenders of their country, of sober and industrious citizens, or virtuous and Christian husbands and fathers. Persevere courageously in your toilsome but important functions; co-operate with the zeal of the charitable pastor whose care and liberality have gathered this numerous family around you, to be nourished with the bread of truth, and instructed in the science of salvation; tell your pupils again and again that there is no happiness without virtue, and no solid virtue without piety; propose to them continually the example of that holy child whose panegyric they now hear, and who, by the incomparable innocence of his early habits, has deserved to be adduced as the model, and invoked as the patron of the most feeble and most interesting of all ages.

But if we follow the progress af our saint, we shall find him to be the model of youth in like manner. There is a time of life when the passions which harass the human heart burn with the force of all their fires, and when reason, which ought to resist and restrain them, has not yet arrived at its full maturity and strength. It is at that critical season of early youth that most men go astray, and rush into those disorders which

* Brothers of the Christian Schools.

often embitter their remaining days with anguish and reproach. Our young saint was exempt from that calamity. Long favoured by the grace of God, and faithful in corresponding with it—filled with the salutary fear of the Lord, and that true wisdom which excels the experience of the aged, he knew that the most precious, but the most frail, of all treasures—that of a pure heart—could only be preserved by vigorous caution, by a constant resistance to the propensities of nature, and by the avoidance of every dangerous occasion. He was not taught the admirable maxims of our new philosophy—that the passions are the principle of virtue, and that care should be taken to stimulate rather than to subdue them—that the pleasures of the senses are motives to good actions, and the great impelling force to morality—that dances, theatrical exhibitions, and the most profane amusements, are more favourable than injurious to society at large. Such a carnal doctrine, which is scarce worthy of paganism, would have inspired him with no sentiments save those of horror. Instructed in a different school, he mortified his flesh; he watched over all the movements of his heart; he shunned the boisterous sports of the circus, the vain and indecent pomp of the theatre, and the idleness of these dangerous assemblies where all the seductive allurements of voluptuousness are displayed, and all its snares are set. Study, prayer, the reading of religious books, the society of a few pious friends, and works of charity, engrossed all his time, and left him no leisure for pernicious or frivolous amusements. Yet, if he wished to follow the ordinary inclinations of his age, he would not have been in want of means to gratify them. The premature death of his parents had left him his own master, and the possessor of an immense property. Instead of wasting his large possessions in shameful debauchery or senseless extravagance, he preferred to make them the treasure of the poor. He searched after hidden wants and timid distress, to relieve them in secret. Nothing can be more interesting than the sacred dexterity and the amiable activity which he employed to conceal, not only from the eyes of strangers, but from the very objects of his liberality, the source from which that liberality was diffused amongst them, as he wished that they would thank that Providence alone whose invisible agent he wished to be. But it was the will of God that the repetition of a benevolent action should at length reveal him. Two virtuous sisters, to whom a father once wealthy, but now reduced by a train of calamities to extreme indigence, was unable to afford a fortune, had received from this unseen

hand as much as procured them respectable alliances. A third sister, no less worthy of regard than the others, entertained the hope of being treated in turn with equal kindness. She expected a third gift, and her expectations were not deceived. But so close a watch was set on this occasion, that the mysterious benefactor was seen at the very moment when he deposited his last offering; and he could no longer escape the gratitude which he had so long eluded, nor the public applause which his modesty so greatly feared. The public knew to whom they should attribute a hundred other acts of secret liberality, whose author they before vainly strove to find; and all were loud in their admiration of a charity so ingenuous, so lavish, and so humble, in such early youth.

Oh! religion of my God! such are the tastes which thou dost inspire, such the inclinations which thou dost suggest to the hearts of those who obey thee, such the enjoyments which thou persuadest them to covet. Happy, a thousand times happy, are the youth who are obedient to thy voice, and faithful to thy maxims! They are beloved by heaven and by earth; they find real glory to consist in virtue, and present happiness in the unfailing hopes of the future. What peace, and unalloyed joy, and unvarying calm, must ever dwell in a devout and guileless soul! But what consolation or benefit can the sinner enjoy? Answer me, yourself, unfortunate young man, who have shaken off the yoke of faith, and who live according to the impulse of your passions. Tell me, has not your heart remained empty ever since you have banished God from it? Has it not heaved, like an angry sea, since your unrestrained desires have never ceased to make their storms rage against it? Has guilt afforded you the contentment and happiness which you sought in its pursuit? Is your conscience at rest? Do not tiresomeness, disgust, and black despair pursue you even in the midst of your criminal pleasures? And do not an accusing cry, and a summons of death, issue from the inmost depths of your soul, filling you with alarm and terror? Senseless men! You make virtue an object of derision, and yet you secretly envy the calm which the virtuous man enjoys; you boast of your excesses, and yet you are forced to feel their infamy and shame; you seem to defy the thunders of heaven, and yet you tremble at them in secret. Alas, my brethren, if young men were never more dissolute than they are in our own days—if the errors and weaknesses of our fathers have been succeeded by monstrous debauchery, and execrable voluptuousness—if the tribunals resound with crimes

never known before—if it be not unusual to see amongst us young men who, in life's early spring, have already drunk the chalice of pleasure to the very dregs, who, satiated, degraded, and brutified, are weary of life, and fall into a dark despair, which sometimes drives them to fall into their own hands—it is to irreligion we must attribute all these miseries. In happier days the fear of the Lord at least moderated the violence of passion; the sight of the holy altars and the divine mysteries inspired pure thoughts; Christian instructions led the sinner to enter into himself, and excited remorse within him; the duty which obliged men to approach the holy table on solemn occasions, impeded the career of guilt, and severed the bonds of iniquity; everything reminded man of his heavenly origin and his eternal destiny; everything reconciled him to God and the practice of virtue. But since Christians have become strangers to their religion—since they have forgotten all its lessons and all its laws—since they no longer enter our temples, and no longer partake of the bread of the altar, and are no longer ashamed of anything, except piety and faith—profligacy in morals has become like a torrent without banks to restrain it; the inclinations of early age rush on with unbridled impetuosity; there are no limits to its excesses; and the fairest portion of human life has become, as it were, a prey disputed for and devoured by every vice. And after this, can we feel surprised that the right arm of the Most High has grown heavy upon this generation, and that it has often smote our youth with the most dreadful blows? Is it not our youth that has chiefly been the victims of our tedious and frightful calamities? Is it not our youth—alas! how it pains me to revive such cruel recollections—is it not they who have been gathered together year after year, from every part of France, by the orders of merciless tyrants, and often loaded with chains, and sent to the slaughter like a worthless flock? Have they not, for the last twenty-five years, dyed every sea and every river with their blood, and strewed every land with their mangled bodies, from the equator to the poles? Could the divine vengeance be written in more palpable characters? Tell me not that the people have experienced similar disasters in every age. No, my brethren, no; they are not ordinary calamities—those of a nation so long oppressed by the axe of the executioner within, and the sword of the enemy from without. That is not an ordinary calamity—that revolution, which has consigned us by turns to the fury of Cataline, to the proscriptions of the triumvirate, to the ravages

of Alaric, to the bloody despotism of Nero, to the resentment of all nations. They are not ordinary calamities—these frightful wars, which have cut down ten millions of men within twenty years—these disastrous campaigns in which immense armies have been utterly destroyed in a few weeks, buried beneath the frost and snow, and devoured by wild beasts and birds of prey. Oh! my God, are not these punishments enough? Wilt Thou not have mercy upon us at length! May Thy indignation be appeased, O Lord! Vouchsafe to convert us and pardon us, rather than to consign us to our obduracy, and to destroy us. Hear the prayers which our holy patrons offer on our behalf, and teach us to return to the paths in which they walked, that we may find the true source of all happiness and glory, as they have found it.

II.—We have seen, my brethren, that St. Nicholas, whilst in the world, was the model of Christian childhood and Christian youth. We shall next follow him into a new career, and consider him, in the priesthood and episcopacy, as the model of the priests and pastors of the Church.

I am at a loss to say whether I can make this world comprehend the dignity and greatness of the Christian priesthood. That world, which is accustomed to judge of every thing by the senses, would respect and honour our holy profession, if it shone forth, as of old, with the splendour of wealth and dignity; but the priesthood of Jesus Christ, deprived of their earthly possessions and their temporal privileges, instead of seeming more worthy of respect, have become the object of its contempt; and the sacred functions, which are no longer surrounded by any outward pomp, seem to present an obscure and vulgar aspect; yet we must be allowed to say that we, the ministers of the altar, possess a greatness altogether independent of birth, or fortune, or titles, and a dignity which is not human, but heavenly and divine, and which can only be disowned by those in whom faith is weakened or extinct. Are not we the representatives of Jesus Christ on earth? Do not we alone possess the stupendous power of unloosing and purifying consciences, of sacrificing the Victim whom Angels adore, of touching the Lord with our hands, of distributing His flesh amongst the faithful, of being the bearers of His word to kings and people, and of diffusing, in His name, every grace and blessing over all the earth? This is something greater than all the pomp of worldly power and greatness; and, therefore, how great soever the senseless contempt of this world may be, so far from being ashamed of our holy state and

its honourable livery, we shall ever feel a pride in it, and we shall never regard the sublimity of the character with which we are invested but with religious awe.

Such was the feeling of our saint; for after a childhood and a youth, consecrated to the practice of the most eminent virtues, he did not presume to aspire to the clerical office; but when his modesty had been overcome by the voice of his bishop, who called him to ascend the steps of the sanctuary, he joyfully abandoned all his property, and bidding an eternal farewell to all the honours of this world, he devoted himself to the humble and august functions of the ministry. To give an idea of the zeal which he manifested, the talents which he displayed, and the success which attended his efforts for the conversion of the people, it is enough to say that the celebrity of his talents and his sanctity having gained extensive circulation, the assembled bishops of his province selected him to fill a great see which had become vacant. He was too worthy of the episcopal dignity not to fear it and to avoid it; accordingly his biographers relate that in order to avoid the dangers of the pastoral office, he threw himself into a bark, and abandoned himself to the mercy of the waves; that after having miraculously escaped shipwreck, and having been driven by the winds to the coast of Palestine, he remained for some time concealed in the very caverns where the prophets of Israel and Juda had dwelt of old; and that afterwards seeking a surer refuge, he buried himself in a monastery, where, confounded with a crowd of religious, whom he surpassed in austerity, he hoped to be concealed from the sight of men for ever. But Heaven, favourable to the combined prayers of the clergy and people, revealed the secret of his retreat. The humble cenobite was forced away from it, and despite his resistance, dragged to the church, where he received episcopal consecration with universal applause, and was placed upon the see of Myra, in Lycia, a great metropolis, to which more than thirty suffragan bishops were afterwards subject. It is here we should represent this perfect pastor, his unbounded solicitude, his unwearied vigilance, his continual prayer, in which whole nights were spent; his uninterrupted fasts, his assiduity in nourishing his flock with the bread of holy doctrine, his immense alms, his affectionate and generous care of the sick, the orphans, the widows, and the miserable of every class; we should relate the numberless prodigies effected by the omnipotent charity of this second Eliseus—plagues averted, and tempests calmed at his voice—bread multiplied between his hands—the most incurable

maladies healed by a word—the dying and the dead restored to life and health; but I must hurry on to relate what is more glorious than all this. It is glorious in a bishop to work miracles; it is more glorious to suffer for the faith. St. Nicholas had ascended the see of Myra at a period of glory and sorrow for the Church, when Christian blood deluged the whole extent of the Roman empire. Under the title of emperors, Augustuses and Cæsars, six cruel tyrants, or rather six ferocious monsters, Diocletian, Maximin, Gallus, Maximian, Maxentius, and Licinius, sometimes dividing the authority amongst themselves, and sometimes wresting it from each other, inflicted the most furious persecutions for a period of ten years, with the avowed intention of annihilating Christianity at length, and of making its name disappear from off the face of the earth; but, crushed by the malediction of Heaven, they disappeared themselves, one after the other, with a rapidity which must ever terrify the imitators of their impious cruelties. Of all these foes of heaven, there only remained Licinius, who, more perfidious, but not less blood-thirsty than the rest, feigned to be reconciled to the proscribed religion, married the sister of the great Constantine, his colleague in the empire, published edicts favourable to the Christians, and even made no scruple of publicly invoking their God; for it is not in our days alone that persecuting tyrants have summoned hypocrisy to the aid of rage and hatred. As soon as Licinius, perceived that he was strong enough to dissemble no longer, he threw off the mask and commanded that idols should be adored through all the East, which was then under his dominion. This order was everywhere executed, and the torments universally renewed with atrocious rigour. The holy bishop of Myra, filled with the spirit of Ignatius, Polycarp, and Cyprian, who had long pointed out to pastors the road to martyrdom, afforded his flock a like example of intrepidity and firmness. When dragged before the magistrates, he appeared there undismayed; he beheld the executioners and their instruments of torture without emotion; he patiently endured the torments; and manifested such an ardent desire to die at that moment for God's sake, that the cruel proconsul, envying him the happiness of a speedy death, sent him loaded with chains to a remote and savage region, where, wasted with misery, plunged in the horrors of a dungeon, and oppressed with the most barbarous treatment, he would have sunk at last, had not a splendid victory of the faithful Constantine crushed the power of the hypocritical and perjured tyrant, and

restored liberty to the illustrious captive, who returned to his church, bearing the glorious marks of his sufferings, and performing miracles so profusely along his journey that the surname of Thaumaturgus was given him ever after throughout the Catholic world, as it had been given some years before to the incomparable Gregory of Neocesarea. What joy must not the holy confessor have felt on finding himself once more in the midst of his people! With what transports must he not have been received amongst them! With what additional authority must he not have preached the faith which he had defended at the risk of his life, and sealed with his very blood! It is thus, my brethren, that the illustrious Pontiff who governs the Church at the present day, after having been dragged from exile to exile, and from prison to prison, during five years, whilst no violence nor threats could overcome his generous resistance, has appeared again upon the chair of Peter, with redoubled glory, and inspired the whole Christian world with increased veneration and regard.

I should pass over one of the most honourable events in the life of your holy patron, if I failed to mention, as I do upon the authority of his Greek biographers, that he was one of the fathers of the great Council of Nice, the first of all the ecumenical councils—that is to say, of these venerable assemblies, who, representing the universal Church, and relying on the promises of its divine founder, pronounce their infallible decrees in that imposing formula which has been consecrated by the Apostles themselves, IT HATH SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST AND TO US.* The bishop of Myra was worthy of appearing along with Athanasius, Germanius, Eustachius, Paphnucius, and Macarius, in that august assembly of Nice, which was almost entirely composed of the saints and confessors of the faith, which enacted such wise regulations in discipline, vindicated the divinity of Jesus Christ, proclaimed the consubstantiality of the WORD, and crushed the most conceited of all heresies by that solemn and awful decree which has been heard in every succeeding age—"Anathema to the impious Arius! anathema to his doctrines and writings! anathema to his followers!" It is thus that all the heresies which have arisen from time to time have been crushed with the same authority, and according to the same form. This is the energy which has never been weakened in the true Church—which has been manifested at Trent, in the sixteenth century, as well as

* *Acts* xv. 28.

at Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon, in the fourth and fifth; and this is what our adversaries, by a most evident abuse of words, describe as intolerance. Ah! the really intolerant are those who persecute, those who proscribe, those who force the clergy and the faithful to oaths which are contrary to their consciences, and in the event of a refusal, condemn them to exile, imprisonment, and death. But it is not intolerance to reject error, and never consent to the least admixture of truth and falsehood, or light and darkness; or else we should reproach St. Paul with intolerance, as he has given utterance to this energetic denunciation: *Some have made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have delivered up to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.** We should reproach our Lord Jesus Christ Himself with intolerance, as He has said, *If any man will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.*† *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me.*‡ *He that believeth shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned.*§ The Church, although persecuted by her enemies, at all times, has never been a persecutor herself; and if some of her children have exercised unjust severities in her name, she has invariably disclaimed them; but, jealous of her condition and prerogatives as the lawful spouse, she has never shared them with the adulteress or the handmaid. Essentially one, even as truth itself is one, and inflexible even as that truth, she has always cut off the spiritual anathema, and rejected from her bosom, every one of those who failed to profess the unity and integrity of her doctrine, without even sparing her own ministers, when they became rebellious to her authority. Such is her spirit, such her invariable rule; and whenever obstinate men, who refuse to abjure the error which she condemns, have presumed to join the ranks of the faithful clergy, and to appear in the high places of the sanctuary, the Christian people, guided by the instincts of Catholicity, have spurned their presence and said to them, either by their groans, or murmurs, or flight, "Depart, you defiled, who are not in the faith. *Recedite polluti.*‖ Depart from that holy place where our eyes should behold none but ministers obedient to the Church; and until you have purified your lips by the unequivocal profession of orthodox doctrine, you shall not scandalize us by seeing you ascend the altar, or touch these

* 1 *Tim.* i. 20. † *Matt.* xvii. 17. ‡ *Luke* x. 16. § *Mark* xvi. 16.
‖ *Lament.* iv. 15.

holy things which your hands defile." *Recedite, abite, nolite tangere.**

On his return to his see, after so many services rendered to religion—after so many trials borne—after so many torments suffered—after so many fatigues endured, this holy old man applied himself with unfaltering energy to the execution of the decrees of Nice, to purify his Church from the taint of Arianism, to revive the rigour of discipline, to reform public morals, to revive faith and piety, to impart consolation to all who need it, and to console them in all their distresses. His zeal and charity were ever increasing. Amongst the wonders which he never ceased to perform, the most astonishing was the perfection of his virtues, when, full of years and merits, he was at length apprized by an inward voice that his end was come. He then addressed an affectionate farewell to his beloved flock; and having bequeathed to them the counsels of his wisdom and paternal solicitude, he parted from them with tears, telling them, as St. Paul told the priests at Ephesus, that they would never more behold him on this earth, and retired to a religious solitude, where he ended his days with a small number of cenobites, in fasting, vigils, silence, and the contemplation of heavenly things, with these and the Angels as the only witnesses of his expiring sighs. It is said that concerts of these blessed spirits were heard in his humble retreat, and that the odour of heaven filled it, when his soul, escaping from its mortal prison, was about to be united to its God for ever. It is certain that the miraculous power which distinguished him through life did not abandon his lifeless remains. Without referring to the miracles which followed his death, and the fame of which has filled the earth, there is nothing more authenticated in history than the acts drawn up at Bari, in the eleventh century, by order of the archbishop and magistrates, attesting a number of miracles wrought before their very eyes, in presence of innumerable witnesses. When his sacred remains were removed to the city, his bones, like those of Eliseus, raised the dead to life. The efficacy of his intercession, which was often experienced by sailors amid the dangers of the sea, caused him to be chosen as the patron of navigators. Whole armies were indebted to him for their safety, and kings for the preservation of their states and crowns. And then how universal was the reverence for his memory! It would be impossible to enumerate the temples and basilicas which have been erected in his honour

* *Lament.* iv. 15.

through every part of the earth, from the remotest ages; but amongst these may be mentioned five splendid ones at Constantinople, one of which has been built by the emperor Justinian. Many great nations have adopted this illustrious saint as their patron: Belgium honours him with a special reverence; the immense Muscovite nation places him in the first rank of its saints, after the Apostles themselves; the Greek Church preserves an unbounded veneration for his memory, even since an unfortunate schism has separated that church from us. In a word, as I have observed in the beginning of this discourse, the east and the west, the north and the south, unite in rendering homage to the immortal bishop whose festival we this day celebrate. Therefore, I am not surprised that two great and distinguished popes, besides three other supreme pontiffs, have felt a pride in bearing his name beneath the tiara, and that many illustrious patriarchs have been desirous of the same honour.

Oh! illustrious saint! how I love to recall thy glorious prerogatives! how happy I esteem those to be who are under thy protection! how I glory in the bonds which unite me to thee! how I congratulate this people in belonging to thee! Lend a favourable ear to the prayers which they address to thee, as well as to those of the venerable pastor who has so long instructed them by his exhortations to honour thy virtues, and taught them by his example to imitate them. Look with interest upon this city, where devotion to thee is so ancient — where religion has always reckoned true adorers—and where so many generous feelings which a terrific revolution could restrain but could not extinguish, are now so manifest. Place under thy powerful protection this land, which has lately been so unfortunate, and which is still forced to struggle with the principle of destruction which she bears within her, that her people may abjure all their errors, and henceforth observing the most inviolable fidelity to the majesty of God, and rallying round the sacred banner of religion, they may enjoy peace in this world, and everlasting happiness in the next. *Amen.*

PANEGYRIC OF ST. SATURNINUS, THE FIRST BISHOP OF TOULOUSE.

"In Christ Jesus, by the Gospel I have begotten you."—1 *Cor.* iv. 15.

THESE beautiful words, addressed by the great Apostle to the Church of Corinth, which he had the honour to establish, may be addressed with equal justice to you, my brethren, by the great saint whom we honour upon this day. Methinks I hear him addressing you this day from that tomb where his precious relics have been laid for so many ages, in that voice which was so familiar to your fathers: "O you, to whom I have brought the blessings of redemption and the light of Christianity—others may boast of having erected your walls, and surrounded your city with ramparts, and civilized you by laws, and placed you in the rank of celebrated nations by the cultivation of the arts and sciences; but I have done more, by rescuing you from idolatry, and giving you up to the true God, to be a portion of the chosen race and holy nation, destined to possess an immortal kingdom. Your fathers according to the flesh, have transmitted to you those happy natural qualities, in which men and nations glory—such as warlike valour, splendid endowments of mind, and the noble love of country; but I have begotten you in Christ Jesus, and regenerated you by baptism, and sown the seeds of supernatural and divine virtues in your souls. *In Christo Jesu per evangelium ego vos genui.* The pastors and sacred ministers who have guided you in the ways of salvation, and nourished with the doctrine of truth, may be called your guides and instructors; but I alone am your father, as I have begotten you by the Gospel, and as I have been the first to give you birth and life in the order of grace. *Si decem millia pædagogorum habeatis in Christo sed non multos patres.** Men may honour me elsewhere as a saint and pontiff—but here, I am an apostle; and, as long as you preserve the treasure of true faith, as long as you bear the glorious name of Christian, so long shall you be the living proof and the glorious seal of my apostleship. *Et si aliis non sum apostolus sed tamen vobis sum; nam signaculum apostolatus mei vos estis.*† What Paul has effected at Thessalonica, at Philippi, and at Corinth, I have effected amongst

* "For if you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers."—1 *Cor.* iv. 15.

† "And if unto others I be not an apostle, but yet to you I am; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord."—1 *Cor.* ix. 2.

you; and even what Paul could not say to the faithful of these countries, this tomb would declare to you on my behalf, if I hesitated to say it for myself. It is in the midst of you, and for the sake of you, that I have sacrificed my life; and the church of Toulouse, your mother, is the only and beloved spouse which I too have purchased at the price of my own blood."*

What elevated thoughts, what glorious memories are identified with the solemnity which assembles us here, my brethren, upon this day. To point out the object of it would be to describe the whole scene of your religious antiquities. In celebrating the memory of your first bishop, you also celebrate the foundation of Christian Toulouse, the expulsion of the false deities which defiled this soil, the abolition of their impure and barbarous worship, the happy moment when your fathers escaped from darkness to light, from the licentiousness of pagan habits to the purity of evangelical virtues, from the ignominious yoke of devils to the blissful and sacred liberty of the children of God. The very name of Saturninus recalls the memory of all these glorious changes, which were the precious fruits of his preaching and death. With what joy, then, should you not listen to the promulgation of his praises?

There are frightful revolutions, my brethren. There are some which shake the foundations of states and kingdoms, corrupt and excite their people, destroy morality in its very root, eradicate religion and faith from the heart, let loose the passions, substitute atheism for piety, anarchy for subordination, and chaos for order; but how salutary and benevolent has been the revolution which, at the end of four thousand years, dethroned guilt and error at last, to establish the dominion of truth and virtue, elevated the thoughts of man from perishable to eternal things, furnished the just and the sinner with different hopes and fears after the present life, made the law of God the basis of all human enactments, placed above all the tribunals of this earth, the tribunal of an invisible and omnipotent Judge, whose decrees are irrevocable, reinstated conscience in all its rights, retrenched wayward reason within proper limits, and exhibited as the Lawgiver of the world, the Son of God, who had come down from heaven to instruct us and to save us. The human race seemed regenerated, and a new era begun. They who have been the ministers of providence for the fulfilment of that mighty work, deserve the love

*Acts xx. 28.

and gratitude of all mankind. Every city which became Christian, carefully preserved the memory of the saint who converted it to the faith; solemn festivals were consecrated to his honour; and the homage which was due to him became a part of the religion of the people. Such is the origin, and such the object of the festival which has been celebrated here for the last fifteen hundred years in honour of St. Saturninus; and it is sufficient to indicate what should be the subject of his panegyric, in which we shall consider him, first, as an apostle, and secondly, as a martyr.

Oh, great saint, whose panegyric has been so often heard in this venerable and ancient temple, may the tribute which is offered upon this day by too feeble lips, be acceptable to thee. And Thou, O thrice holy God! who art the sole object of our adoration when we reverence thy faithful servants—Thou, to whom all the devotions which we practise towards them are referred, as the author of the miracles which they perform through Thy power, and the virtues which they practise through Thy grace—vouchsafe to bless and assist my efforts in speaking of him who first taught this people to know Thee, and who was the first to sacrifice himself in this place for Thy glory and for our salvation. *Ave Maria, &c.*

I. The Christian Church struggled for more than two centuries with no arms but those of patience and prayer, against all the might of the Roman Empire. She never grew weary of suffering; but her persecutors were equally unwearied in the invention of fresh tortures, and consigning to the executioner all who dared to adore the true God in defiance of their prohibition. The sixth general persecution had drawn to a close; The blood of the faithful and their pastors had flowed profusely through every part of the known world; it deluged the prisons and the judgment-halls, the circus and the theatre, the highways and public places, the palaces and gardens of the emperors, the temples and altars of idol deities. Amid all this frightful but unavailing slaughter, the flock of Jesus Christ multiplied; proscribed religion spread through every land, and passed from province to province, and from kingdom to kingdom, with the rapidity of a fire which consumes a forest. The Church, to bid a prouder defiance to hell, fixes her centre and her throne in the very throne and centre of idolatry. The chair of Peter, the sure foundation of a spiritual empire, destined to survive all the kingdoms of this earth, arose and stood unshaken beside the throne of the Cæsars, in that Rome which had been drunk with the martyrs' blood. Eighteen

pontiffs, from the Prince of the Apostles, had succeeded each other upon that sacred chair; St. Fabian was about to ascend it in turn; having escaped the sword of the cruel Maximin, but destined to fall subsequently beneath that of Decius, he had time to signalize his pontificate by a glorious undertaking, which was the greatest benefit your country could receive; he turned his attention and solicitude towards France, and resolved to achieve the conquest of this fair land to the Gospel.

The cities of Lyons and Vienne had already embraced the faith which had been preached to them by the disciples of St. Polycarp a hundred years before. The names of Pothin and Ireneus—the martyrdom of these two illustrious bishops, and of twenty thousand Christians sacrificed along with them—had made these churches celebrated over all the earth. The church of Arles was, perhaps, still more ancient, and seems to have been founded by a disciple of St. Peter; but Christianity had made very little further progress through France; and although a few grains of the evangelical seed had fallen here and there, they fructified but little in a land still defiled by all the abominations of paganism.

But the time at length arrived when the divine word should be announced there with more success. And here a great and interesting spectacle attracts our notice. As the twelve Apostles were sent from Judea to renew the face of the earth, so also seven bishops set out from Rome to renovate your provinces. Oh, France, can you ever be unmindful of your obligations to these generous men, who left their native land to look for death upon a foreign soil, and at that price to leave you the most precious of all inheritances? See them approach. As they reach the boundary between this country and Italy, they stop short, and, like conquerors, they view and divide the provinces which they are to bring down in obedience to the yoke of faith. St. Denis directs his course to the north, and selects the banks of the Seine as the scene of his labours; others take up their positions between the Rhine and the Loire; Gatian reaches Tours; and Saturninus is led by Providence within your walls.

Bear in mind the condition of your city at that period. Inhabited by the very celebrated tribe of the Tectosages, and therefore styled "Tholosa Tectosagum"—proud of the antiquity of its origin, the rank which it held in the province of Narbonne, the favours lavished on it by the Roman emperors, the magnificence of its buildings, its theatres and its palaces, the immense wealth accumulated in the temples of Apollo and

Minerva, the renown of its poets and orators, who gained for it the title of Palladian—intoxicated by pleasure, insatiable in shows and games, and captivated, even to frenzy, with every pagan superstition. Toulouse opposed the doctrine of the Gospel with all the obstacles which spring from pride, from false science, from the unrestrained love of pleasure, and the blindest zeal for an extravagant and impious worship.

Oh, Saturninus! how great a work remains for you to perform in this idolatrous city. Can you venture to expect that, at your summons, it will break its gods of gold and silver, to fall prostrate before the humble Son of Mary?—that it will renounce the brilliant fictions of its mythology for the sad and grave mysteries of Christianity, and the joyous pomp, and bustle, and licentiousness of its festivals, for the modest silence and severe reserve which prevail in yours, and a religion which flatters the senses and passions in everything for the severe and crucifying morality which you inculcate? —will it prefer incomprehensible doctrines to all the science and wisdom of its philosophers?—will it believe you rather than its priests, its oracles, and all Olympus which it has adored for many ages past? Would not such a revolution be the most astonishing of all prodigies? And what, I pray you, are the means you employ to effect it? Is it eloquence? "I am a stranger to it; and even though I possessed all the art of rhetoricians, I am not disposed to employ it." Perhaps it is extensive and profound learning? "I only know Jesus crucified." Well, then, the support of some great and powerful monarch, armies, and treasures? "The kings of this earth are the enemies of the Master whom I serve. I come alone—without a protector, without soldiers, without riches, without arms." But what must be expected by those who are disposed to believe and follow you? "Persecutions, insults, loss of property, tortures, and the glory of dying for Jesus Christ." Are these the promises you hold out to them? "The Apostles who have gone before me have made no other." But how can you gain over men to your side, by proposing to them all that nature avoids and abhors, as their only recompense? "I will show them this cross; and it will teach them how sweet it is to suffer." But the cross itself is the ridicule of the world. "It is the power of God; it works all miracles; it changes the hearts of all; and it will overcome the world at last."

Let us contemplate the effects, my dear friends. The saint enters this profane city; he is still obscure and unknown there; and the gods who are adored there are at once alarmed;

the oracle which issued its answers to citizens and strangers is silent; in vain do the priests look for the usual signs in the entrails of the victims; some mysterious sadness and gloom which pervades the temples, proclaims that the empire of Satan is in danger, and that his throne, so long established in these places, is shaken at last. Saturninus begins to preach the words of salvation secretly, and the divine power of the cross produces its effects in the hearts of all. Men listen to him who teaches that there is but one God, the creator and ruler of the universe—a pure, invisible, infinite spirit, who fills the world by His immensity; that He alone is entitled to receive the incense and the love of men: that He has loved them so as to give up His only Son for their sakes; that He wishes to be adored in spirit and in truth: that His law is above reproach; that all virtues form a part of His worship; that the gods of the gentiles are devils; that their sacrilegious mysteries must be detested, and their temples avoided as the schools of every vice. They are filled with wonder and emotion at hearing him speak of the mercy and justice of the Lord, the deep designs of His wisdom, the incarnation of the word, the life to come, the happiness of the just, and the eternal torments reserved for the guilty. They learn to relish the sublime precepts of the divine Lawgiver, to appreciate the worth of chastity, temperance, fraternal charity, and true piety. They acknowledge that a morality so sublime, and a religion so holy, are the most precious gifts that Heaven could bestow on man. They begin to despise the prosperity and the adversities of this passing life, to love and fear only what must last for ever. They embrace the faith; they desire the grace of baptism; and its sacred waters flow upon the heads of numerous neophytes. The infant Church of Toulouse follows the model of the early Church established by the Apostles at Jerusalem; the new faithful have but one heart and one soul; they converse only on their blessed hopes; they possess riches only to shut them up in the hearts of the poor; and their only desire is martyrdom. Oh, my God! the beauty of Thy law was felt by those men who were born in the darkness of infidelity; and they were ready at once to die for it; and shall we, children of Christ's kingdom—we who have imbibed the doctrine of truth at our mother's breasts—shall we lose all knowledge of its value?—shall we abandon it for fables that are more vain, and maxims that are more corrupt than those of paganism, itself?

The holy pastor enjoyed the consolation of seeing his flock

increase from day to day. He assembled them together, to nourish them with the bread of the word, and the grace of the sacraments, in a modest oratory, like one of those domestic churches in which St. Paul used to assemble his disciples. This cradle of your Church, my brethren—this first Christian temple in your city—was situated not far from the capital which contained the altars of the false gods, their silent oracle, their statues of brass and marble, and all the objects of a senseless worship. What a contrast! Here, a stately edifice erected in honour of devils; there, an humble roof, beneath which dwells the majesty of the thrice holy God. Here, victims slain; there the sacrifice of the Lamb who taketh away the sins of the world. Here, hands ever bloody, and often murderous, and savage, and inhuman priests; there, a venerable pontiff raising his innocent hands to Heaven, to bring down its blessings upon earth. Here, lascivious songs, voluptuous dances, sanctified orgies, disorder and guilt erected into duties of religion and piety; there, the sacred harmony of hymns and canticles, recollection, compunction, the ardent sighs of hearts inflamed with divine love, the august ceremonies and pure rites of the holy and immaculate religion of the Lord. Here illusion, deceit, imposture, vain credulity, and deceitful hopes; there the light of the prophets, the truth of God Himself, firm and enlightened faith, unfailing and immortal hope.

So striking a contrast made a salutary impression upon the minds of all; and the virtues of Saturninus deepened that impression. His mildness, his patience, his humility, the innocence and austerity of his life, his detachment from all things, his universal charity, his fortitude, his zeal, his prudence, exhibited him to every eye as a finished model of evangelical perfection. His habits were but the reflection of his doctrine; and his whole person, as it were, a living portrait of that Jesus whom his words proclaimed. Men could not repress a feeling of reverence at the mere sight of him; and they asked what motive could have brought a venerable stranger so far away, and induced him to encounter so many dangers, and to embrace so many labours, for the sanctification and benefit of an unknown nation. Such generous devotedness seemed almost incredible. But how great was the astonishment which his miracles occasioned! How could they refrain from regarding him who commanded the elements—whom the sick, and even the dead, obeyed—as a messenger from heaven? It is in vain, my brethren, to question the prodigies which have been wrought

by apostolic men; they are too splendid and too notorious facts; their fame has spread abroad too far; too many people have beheld them; too many different countries have been the scene of their performance; the change which they have produced in the universe forms too remarkable an era in the history of nations, that any one can class them amongst fancies and illusions, without an excess of foolishness; and the irreligious philosophy of our days, which is so rash and contradictory, is nowhere so senseless as in its arguments against miracles. No; it can never be proved that the Author of nature may not, if He pleases, suspend the laws which He has given it; nor that He has not sometimes been actually pleased to do so; nor that the establishment of true religion is not a sufficiently important motive to make Him exhibit these great effects of His power. Let them say what they will; the pagans who have believed them were not judges prejudiced in their favour: so many thousands who have suffered death, to attest what they have seen, are witnesses above suspicion; the whole world could not have entered into a conspiracy to gain credit for a fable, and to secure the triumph of a band of impostors. On the contrary, it is the force of evident and palpable truth, and the manifest interposition of the Divinity by supernatural operations, that has subdued a rebellious world, and overcome its prejudices, its resistance, and its hatred. Here, as elsewhere, the works of the messenger of God were compared with the deceits of Satan; and it was easy to discern on which side were the true miracles. In this unequal conflict, as in that of Moses with the Egyptian magicians, the victory could not be doubtful: falsehood was confounded day after day; the temples were deserted; crowds assembled around Saturninus; hell gnashed its teeth with unavailing rage; and the promises of Heaven were fulfilled in defiance of every obstacle. Oh! if men would but reflect on the extraordinary and sudden revolution effected, without any natural agency, throughout every part of the world, they must admit at once that it presupposes of necessity, and proves of itself every other prodigy; or, that if it has been accomplished without them, it is itself the most astonishing and inexplicable of any.

This holy bishop established his see in your city, my brethren; but his zeal was not confined within the compass of your walls; he traversed the whole province, and all the neighbouring countries; he even founded churches in Navarre; and historians assure us that the glory of his name filled Spain as well as France. Why should he not, therefore, be associated

in the glory of the apostles? and why should I hesitate to compare him with them? For, like them, he extended the limits of Christ's kingdom; he carried the light of faith to regions shrouded with the shadow of death, and made whole infidel nations bow down beneath the Gospel. Clothed like them with a power from above, with the gift of signs and wonders, the great characteristic of the apostleship, he came *not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in showing of the Spirit and power** of God. If he were asked for a manifest proof of his Divine mission, he need not have recourse to subterfuge, or evasion, or far-fetched arguments; he could say—"The blind see, the deaf hear, the devils are silent, and the dead are raised to life. Such are my credentials and my claims on your attention. If I perform works of which God alone can be the Author, you must, therefore, admit that it is God has sent me." To these extraordinary gifts he united sanctity of life, like the Apostles, and faithfully followed all their examples. Fasting, vigils, labours, stainless purity, poverty in all its rigour, the spirit of prayer, charity ever ready to sacrifice itself for its brethren, and every apostolic virtue shone forth in him with the brightest lustre. He was very different from those pretended reformers, who assert that they were raised up by Heaven to abolish virginity, penance, the vows of religion, the most magnificent and the wisest laws of discipline in the Church, and who proclaim themselves reformers of the spouse of Christ by raising the standard of disorder and licentiousness, as if any one could receive an extraordinary mission from Heaven unless he was a saint. He taught amongst you the same doctrine as Peter announced in Jerusalem and Rome, and Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, and John at Ephesus, and the other disciples through the world at large. He never altered the deposit of the sacred traditions, which were transmitted by those to whom it was said from the beginning, "*Go teach all nations; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*† He spoke the same language as the body of legitimate pastors spoke in every place. If he had deviated from it in any one particular, if he had taught any new doctrine, and substituted the suggestions of his own imagination for the faith of the Church, he would not have been an apostle, but a sectary; instead of being honoured as a saint, he would have suffered the anathema of the Catholic world; and, in that case, if you, my brethren, were the disciples of Saturninus, you

* 1 *Cor.* ii. 4. † *Matt.* xxviii. 19, 20.

would not be disciples of Jesus Christ. Finally, although he did not receive his mission from the very lips of the Saviour, he received it from His representative and vicar upon earth. By this he entered into the direct line of apostolical succession; and as he again has left successors, who form an uninterrupted succession even to our days, you enjoy the consolation of ascending by a glorious chain of orthodox pastors to him, and from him to St. Peter himself.

Oh! ineffable happiness! Whilst others can only ascend about two or three centuries at most—whilst they find here the origin of their sects and the modern founders whose names they bear—whilst they are forced to acknowledge the exact period when their fathers separated from the great Christian community to which they belonged until then, the doctrines of which they wished to change, and which has banished them from its pale—you behold, through the course of ages, your Church ever inseparably united to the primitive and universal Church, bearing no other name but hers—the name of CATHOLIC, which she has received even in the Apostles' Creed—forming but one and the same body with that vast society of faithful which is spread over all the earth—having the same sacraments, the same faith, one and the same head, the successor of the Prince of the Apostles, commissioned to feed that immense flock. To whom are you primarily indebted for such a precious advantage, but to your first bishop, who brought you the living waters of faith from the very spring—who begot you by the Gospel, not to a mortal father, but to Jesus Christ, and gave you as a mother, not the adulteress or the handmaid, but the chaste and lawful spouse, who alone bringeth forth unto life eternal! Happy a thousand times happy, have your fathers been, in having preserved unimpaired the privilege and the inheritance which Saturninus left them! Happy are you, yourselves, my brethren, if Heaven does not think you unworthy of preserving them for ever! But I cannot refrain from exclaiming, in like manner, with a deep feeling of bitterness and sorrow, happy would those great and mighty nations which surround us be, if they had faithfully preserved the trust confided to them by their first Apostles! Happy would Germany be, if it had always honoured the memory and respected the lessons of St. Boniface, and England those of St. Augustine, and Denmark and Sweden those of St. Anscarius, each of whom, in teaching those countries to believe the true God, had also taught them to adhere to Catholic unity! Ah! let us beg of Heaven, by earnest prayer, that

the fold of Jesus Christ may be opened again to receive these nations, that there may be once more but one pastor, one flock, one faith, as there is but one Christ, one baptism, one God, and Father of all.

But, my brethren, let us at least derive instruction from the misfortunes of others; let us carefully watch over our own treasures; let us appreciate the value of the grace we have received through the ministry of St. Saturninus; and as we celebrate this festival to-day, let us renew all our protestations of fidelity to the doctrines which he taught us, to the holy Apostolic See which sent him amongst us, to the Church whose prerogatives he made us experience, and to the Divine Saviour whose salutary yoke he brought us to bear. Let us resolve to die a thousand deaths rather than to shake or overturn with our hands the sacred edifice which he reared by so many labours, and which he finally cemented with his blood.

II.—Minds which are unaccustomed to deep reflection, and to investigate the mysterious causes of the most stupendous effects, are astonished at the fury with which the Christian religion has been persecuted from its very birth. They cannot understand how a doctrine which is altogether heavenly—a law of peace and love—could have been the object of such inveterate and universal hatred; how such incredible efforts could have been made for three hundred years to exterminate those who professed it; and how punishments and tortures which would seem too cruel for the most odious malefactors, could have been devised against them. The fact of this persevering and cruel persecution cannot be seriously disputed or denied, for it is attested by profane as well as by ecclesiastical histories; and we have the names of an almost endless number of martyrs, the most circumstantial narrative of their sufferings, written by contemporaries and even by eye-witnesses, the examinations they went through and the decrees pronounced against them, extracted from the public registers, the inscriptions upon their tombs, which point out the death they suffered, their ashes preserved with reverential care in the very places where they were sacrificed, the edicts of the emperors and the laws in virtue of which they were condemned, and the express admission of the most celebrated pagan authorities, Marcus Aurelius, Julian, Celsus, Libanius, and others who endeavour to explain why the Christians could not be overcome by torments. It is, therefore, certain, that acts of barbarity unprecedented in the annals of the world have been exercised for three whole centuries against the disciples of the Gospel; and this is the pro-

blem which some find so difficult to solve. But, without entering into a discussion which may lead us too far away from our subject, how could it have escaped attention that the doctrine of Jesus Christ excited against it these three terrible adversaries—the nature, the political views, and all the prejudices of mankind!—their nature, because there was no passion, no strong propensity of the human heart against which it did not declare war; their political views, because it prohibited men from obeying the impious orders of the governments of this earth; and their prejudices, because it placed amongst devils, all that the universe had been accustomed to reverence as gods. Imagine, then, how excessive must have been the rage of the voluptuous, the avaricious, the plunderers of other's property, the vindictive, the ambitious, the proud—in short, of all worldlings, against a law which threatened them with eternal punishment unless they renounced all that was more precious to them than life itself. How violent must have been the indignation of the emperors, the magistrates, and all who exercised public authority against an infant society which professed to subject their authority to that of a God whom they were unwilling to recognise, and which offered an open resistance to them in all that concerned the faith. How intense must have been the hatred of the pontiffs, the priests, the famous colleges of augurs, and all the ministers and followers of paganism, against a religion which treated their worship as impiety, their sacred ceremonies as vain superstitions, their oracles as imposture, their mysteries as abominations, and whose manifest tendency was to break their idols, and to overturn their temples and altars throughout the world. And how violent must have been the indignation and anger of the philosophers and sages against these new masters who require the most unreserved submission of conceited reason to incomprehensible doctrines, and to all the teachings of the Crucified whom they proposed to the adoration of mankind. And were not these sufficient causes—to say nothing of the rage of the spirits of darkness who, assailed in every part of their empire, vindicated themselves by means every way worthy of their infernal genius—were not all these sufficient to produce the most furious and the most universal opposition that has been ever known before? Yes; if you reflect upon it, you must admit that all things must have been leagued and combined against such a religion; and that the design of establishing it on earth must have been the most foolish of all enterprises, if it had been devised by any other besides God Himself. Therefore

has its Divine Founder said to His Apostles, *Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves.** *And you shall be hated by all nations because of my name's sake.*† And that assurance was so exactly fulfilled, that Tacitus, a pagan writer, referring, sixty years afterwards, to the Christians who were persecuted under Nero, declared that they were convicted not so much of the crimes which that tyrant imputed to them, as of having incurred the hatred of the human race, "*Haude perinde in crimine incendii, quam odio humani generis convicti sunt.*" Alas! my brethren, is that hatred at length appeased? Oh! how many are there, even at the present day, who would wish to try once more to extinguish, if possible, in blood, that Christianity which they detest. What do I say? Have they not tried it before our very eyes? And when they so lately held power in their hands, have they yielded in cruelty to the most barbarous persecutors? Oh! great God, what murders, what inventions, what refined cruelties have they not perpetrated. And these men were Christians. Can we be astonished, after this, at the excesses of these pagans?

When Saturninus, your Apostle, came to preach the faith in idolatrous France, he was not ignorant of the destiny which awaited him there. Those who preceded him in the same undertaking had suffered a cruel death. The massacre of an entire congregation of the faithful at Lyons and Vienne—the martyrdom of Valerian and Marcel at Chalons, of Symphorian at Autun, of SS Ferreol, Felix, Fortunatus, and Achilleus at Besancon and Valence—too plainly proved that this murderous land destroyed the ambassadors and adorers of the true God; but he exclaimed with St. Paul—"The Holy Spirit leads me to these countries where Satan still bears sway; He has inwardly apprised me that dangers and sufferings await me there; but I fear none of these things; and I value my life at little, so that I may faithfully end my course and accomplish the ministry which the Lord Jesus has confided to me." *Vincula et tribulationes me manent; sed nihil horum vereor, dummodo consummem cursum meum et ministerium verbi quod accepi a Domino Jesu.*‡ Such was the heroism of that great soul; and therefore he regarded neither the blood-thirsty outrages, nor the dark slanders, nor the ferocious threats which, even from the beginning of his preaching, were the first rewards of his zeal, and, as it were, the prelude of the conflict to which hell was preparing to consign him. He heard the murmurs of his

* *Matt.* x. 16. † *Ibid.* xxiv. 9. ‡ *Acts* xx. 23, 24.

enemies, he knew their plots and conspiracies, and he beheld without emotion the most fearful storm gathering and swelling round him. Like the great Apostle, he died in spirit every day: he offered himself unremittingly to God as a victim ready for the sacrifice; and he asked to live only so long as his presence may be necessary to his beloved flock. In the meantime, he bestowed upon them the most tender cares, the consolations of faith, the counsels of wisdom and of pastoral solicitude. He guarded them against seductions, fortified them in the grace of a Christian calling, nourished them with the bread of immortal life, and taught them not to fear those who could only deprive them of a perishable existence. To see him so calm and so devoted to all the duties of the apostleship, you would have imagined that he exercised them in profound peace, and that no danger threatened his head. Meanwhile, the waves of envy and hatred rose higher and higher, and roared around him, ready to swallow him up into their depths. The ministers of the false gods, now unmasked, discredited, and almost deserted, could no longer restrain their rage and malice. The hour of the powers of darkness arrived at last—the hour of thy victory, O Saturninus.

A solemn day arrived—as it is related in the authenticated acts of the saints, which have been written fifty years after his death—about the beginning of the fourth century—a day of an impious festival, which was to be celebrated in honour of the deities that had been overcome by Saturninus. The pontiffs, the priests, the diviners, the augurs, the soothsayers, hasten in crowds to the capitol, where the sacrifice was got ready; and all who adhered to their superstitions followed them. Whilst the smoke of incense filled the temple, the hearts of that multitude were shrouded by a darker gloom; the most violent passions rent their souls asunder; and the devils who presided in that temple forced their poisons to flow through the minds and hearts of their ministers. These, as if seized with a sacred madness, and no longer able to contain themselves, exclaim, "What are we about? How long shall we suffer an audacious stranger to insult us, to ridicule our ceremonies, our worship, and the whole religion of the empire? He already attracts the multitude after him, by his discourse, his deception, and some delusive charm attached to the name of Christ. Our gods are now forced to silence. Shall we wait until they be compelled to abandon us and avoid us, until our temples are abolished, and a new god usurps the place of those we now adore? Will death never release us from this impostor

against whom all our illusions are powerless?" The people, impelled by a like fanaticism, reply to this discourse by dreadful vociferations; and their only concern is to make murder a prelude to the sacrifice which they assembled to offer. At that moment, the holy bishop, after having performed his morning devotions to the Lord, was quietly passing from his house to the church, to sacrifice the Victim without stain, and to renew the oblation of his own life, which he daily made there, as he raised to heaven the chalice which contained the Blood of the Lamb of God. Profoundly recollected, and occupied with heavenly thoughts alone, he passed before this capitol where so many frantic cries and roaring like those of hell itself were heard. He was seen; and the vultures do not pounce more rapidly upon their prey, than these maniacs rushed upon the man of God. He is surrounded, seized by force, and dragged into the temple, to the foot of the altars which he has shaken, and into the midst of the priests whom he has a thousand times confounded. Must he appear there, like a criminal, trembling in presence of his judges? Ah! fettered as he is, he alone preserves a countenance unmoved, serenity sits upon his brow, and paleness upon that of his enemies And yet they dare to ask him to offer sacrifice to idols. O, senseless men, how little you know of Saturninus! You imagine he is weak, because his body is in your hands; but his soul was never stronger nor more invincible than now. 'What!" he exclaims, "shall I burn incense before these lifeless marbles, and that base metal? Shall I burn incense before these gods who, according to your own admission, fear me? Ah! perish these devils, and their worship along with them! and may that omnipotent God whom I serve, and that Divine Redeemer whom I adore, live for ever!" At these words, an unanimous cry of death is heard. Such a generous confession must be instantly punished by the extreme penalty There is no need of tribunal nor of judgment; but who will be the executioner? Will no appropriate minister of the rage of Satan be found amid the multitude possessed by his wickedness? A bull which was destined to be sacrificed upon that day to the god of the capitol was bound in front of the altar, awaiting the knife of the sacrificer; and that ferocious monster must be the executioner of their inveterate revenge He is let loose, and he furiously attacks him. The venerable pontiff is flung upon the ground; his feet are bound to the enraged animal; and they goad him on, to make him still more furious. They make way for him, and he rushes madly forward. Oh! how

can I describe it? The saint has scarcely time to pray for his murderers, and to recommend to God the infant Church on behalf of which he dies; in a moment his head, crushed against the steps of the temple, is torn in pieces; his mangled limbs are scattered all around; and whilst the enraged animal pursues his course as chance directs, the streets and fields are dyed with the blood of Saturninus. Oh! precious blood. When poured upon this land thou hast purified it from its former stains, and made it fertile in fruits of sanctity and salvation. Oh! Church of Toulouse! that blood is the fruitful seed which will multiply thy children, and make Christians spring up on every side. Oh! church of Saturninus! Feeble and timid flock! In vain do men flatter themselves with having scattered you, by striking down the pastor who guided you. He has left you his spirit; and his great soul will continue to animate and to direct you. During his life he inspired you with the faith which makes true adorers; and at his death he has bequeathed you the courage which makes them martyrs. His successors, Hilary, Silvius, and Exuperus, will revive his virtues and consolidate his work You shall not perish; you shall at length gloriously pass through four general persecutions, which shall succeed each other within the space of fifty years; you shall not sink even beneath that of Diocletian, which was so tedious and so bloody; you shall come forth from the midst of such cruel tribulations, as triumphant Israel came forth of old from the waves of the Red Sea, and you shall leave behind you paganism swallowed up in the abyss; within less than a century, not even a vestige of idolatry shall remain, even in the places where it bore undivided sway at the coming of your apostle; upon the ruins of these impure temples, where incense is burnt to vain idols, will be raised an august basilica, consecrated to the most high God and to Jesus Christ, His Son; the sacred relics of the martyr will be placed there with every mark of honour; and after a lapse of fifteen hundred years, it will continue to propose them to the homage of the faithful; and it will resound even then with the praises of Saturninus.

That venerable basilica, my brethren—the first lasting monument of your fathers' piety—is the very edifice in which we are now assembled. These walls have almost been witnesses of the birth of Christianity amongst you. Oh! how they must remind you of the faith of by-gone days, the zeal and fervour of the primitive Church and of the apostolic age. Never forget all that it has cost the saint whose memory we celebrate, to

have begotten you to the Gospel. Never forget the sacrifices your fathers made, and the perils they encountered to acquire and preserve for you the privileges and title of the children of God. Do not, by a most cowardly apostacy, renounce the most precious portion of the inheritance they have left you—that faith which has been their glory, their happiness, the object of all their love, the foundation of their most cherished hopes—to fling yourselves into the depths of irreligion, along with some senseless men who have ceased to believe only when they have ceased to live well; and having despaired of the Divine mercy, strive to fortify themselves against remorse by blasphemy, and against the terrors of the judgment to come by the multitude of their accomplices. Despise their dangerous lessons; or if you have allowed yourselves to be hurried away by the wretched sophistry of unbelief, abjure your errors at the feet of Saturninus, and solicit your reconciliation with Heaven through his powerful intercession. And thou saint, pontiff, apostle, martyr, be not deaf to our entreaties; do not abandon this city, which ought to be precious in thy sight above all the cities of the earth—which has been regenerated by thy labours, and fertilized by thy blood—which still possesses thy precious ashes, and has never ceased to venerate thy name. Alas! we live in an age of guilt, impiety, licentiousness, and madness; obtain for us pastors who resemble thee—who may impede the torrent of iniquity which hurries us away—who may defend the truth, if necessary, at the risk of their lives—who by their examples, may make virtue loved—and who, by reviving amongst us the purity of morality, of faith, and of ancient discipline, may lead us with themselves tothe everlasting tabernacles, to be their joy and crown for evermore. *Amen.*

THE END.

9092
252
Mc 127 MACARTHY, N. TUITE
AUTHOR
Sermons for Sundays and Feast
TITLE
DATE LOANED | BORROWER'S NAME | ROOM NUMBER
FEB 8
OCT 3
STOP
9092